

Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Summer

(January–March) 1996, no 59

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WARNING

The activities covered by this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.

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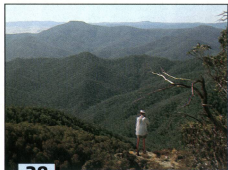
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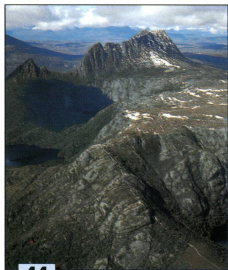
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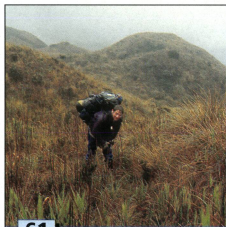
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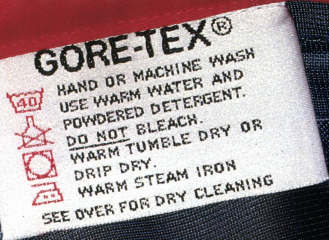


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EDITORIAL

ONE TROPPO

World Heritage woes

On the east coast of the Cape York Peninsula in far north Queensland, between the Daintree and Bloomfield Rivers, is the tiny patch of Australia's last remaining tropical rain forest. Teeming with life and indescribably beautiful, this area adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef is unique. But despite its undeniable qualities and World Heritage status the Daintree wilderness, as the area is known, will soon be history unless we, as concerned Australian citizens, are prepared to make certain that something is done to stop the area's fast slide into environmental oblivion.

The twin evils of real-estate development and what is euphemistically referred to as 'eco-tourism' are destroying the Daintree rain forest at an alarming rate. Greed is rampant at every level. The Queensland Government, the Douglas Shire Council and local tourism operators are marketing the area both in Australia and overseas. Jumbo-jetfuls of eager tourists are flooding in through Cairns International Airport, only an hour's drive south of the Daintree.

Of the two evils, real-estate development is probably making the greater impact. Pristine rain forest, including fan-palm groves of staggering beauty, have been set aside for suburban-style housing subdivision without a preservation order applicable to even a single tree! Prime wilderness sites near Cape Tribulation and at the mouth of the Bloomfield River—the latter accessible only by boat—have been hacked out for opulent commercial accommodation. Here, the well-heeled can fork out hundreds of dollars a night to 'get back to nature', and destress in spas amid the remaining rain forest.

While tree preservation orders and other restrictions now apply to commercial (as opposed to residential) development, and there are attempts under way to buy back prime privately owned land, it is a matter of 'too little, too late'. The negligible (for such a purpose) sum of \$23 million has been allocated to buy back land in the World Heritage Area. This, combined with the fact that only about one-third of the commercial value of such land is being offered, helps to explain the limited impact of this policy. Roadsides are littered with real-estate agents' 'for sale' signs nailed to existing rain-forest giants mutely awaiting execution by chain-saw and 'dozer blade.

'The road' has been the 'making' of the area as far as tourism operators are concerned. Eight years ago, despite national protest, it was extended from Cape Tribulation to connect with the road reaching the Aboriginal settlement on the Bloomfield River, from the north. It is now possible to drive from Cairns to Cooktown by this coastal route. And last year the road was sealed north of the Daintree River for much of the way to Cape Tribulation.

Every day many hundreds of four-wheel-drives, minibuses and buses haul in a throng of tourists to experience the wonders of the rain forest by this road, with many of the four-wheel-drives continuing all the way to Cooktown.

Every local resident who owns an off-road vehicle or an outboard motor is an ecotourism operator, it seems. (Safari-style clothing and battered Akubra hats are de rigueur.) More than 30 organisations offer 'crocodile safaris' on the ten kilometre stretch of the Daintree River (which has pastoral land on either side) upstream from the ferry crossing. If crocs sighted are an indication, it appears that the number of crocodile-safari businesses heavily outnumber crocodiles in the area! Most major tourism operations are foreign owned, mainly by Japanese and UK interests. Despite this seeming over-supply the tourist experience is likely to be one of the least impressive you would have the misfortune to go through. Bus-loads of tourists are rushed from one optimistically oversold 'wilderness experience' to the next.

With a local council with priorities like those of the Douglas Shire Council the present state of affairs is hardly a surprise. It is clearly pro-development and pro-sugar-cane farming. The latter industry has a pitiful environmental record in respect of land clearance (for yet more sugar) in the region. Restriction concerning the impact of fishing and boating on the environment is also minimal. Motor-boat speed limits and fishing bag limits either don't exist or are simply not enforced. But the clearly visible damage resulting from such an absence of controls and regulations pales in comparison with that to sea life from trawling for prawns just off the coast. Much of the seabed has been reduced to a flattened submarine gravel-pit, devoid of much of its life, including sea-grass. Once sea-grass disappears at the bottom of the food chain, so too do many fish. Then, for example, there is the matter of turtles caught in trawlers' nets, many outside the legal limits for trawling because—you guessed it—trawling restrictions are not properly enforced.

It's a desperate situation but not beyond hope. The draft management plan for the Wet Tropics WHA was released last October; public comment is invited until April. For your copy, write to the Wet Tropics Management Authority, PO Box 2050, Cairns, Qld 4870. Please contact your local branch of the Wilderness Society to discuss the issues involved and make a submission before it is too late. ■

Chris Baxter

Environmental impact statement

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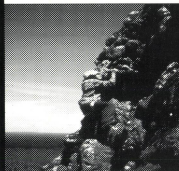


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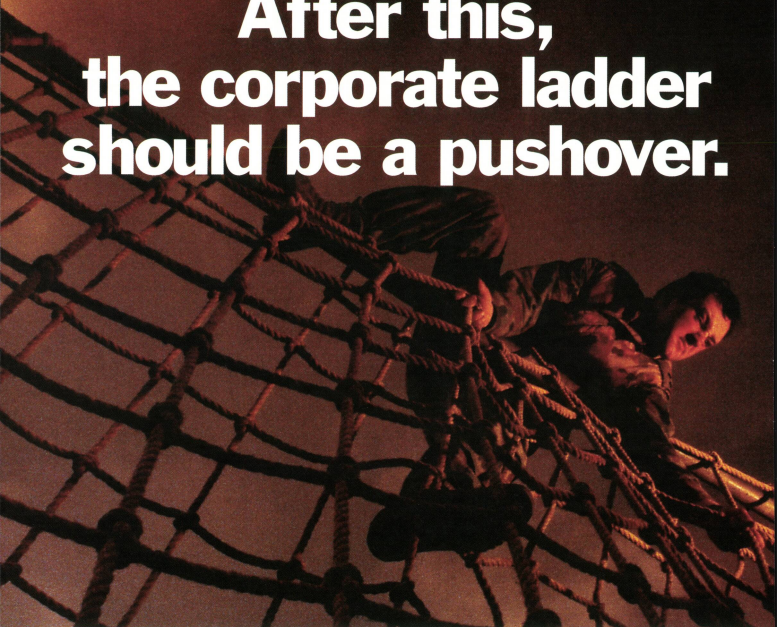
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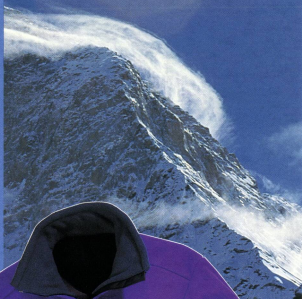
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60	-7	-13	-19	-26	-32	-39	-45	-51	-58	-64	-64
50	-6	-12	-18	-25	-31	-37	-43	-49	-56	-62	-62
40	-5	-11	-17	-23	-29	-35	-41	-47	-53	-59	-59
30	-3	-8	-14	-20	-25	-31	-37	-43	-48	-54	-54
20	0	-5	-10	-15	-21	-26	-31	-36	-42	-47	-47
10	5	0	-4	-8	-13	-17	-22	-26	-31	-35	-35
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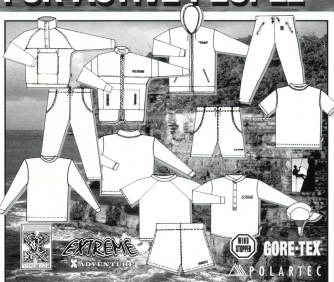
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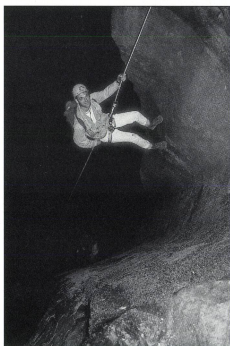
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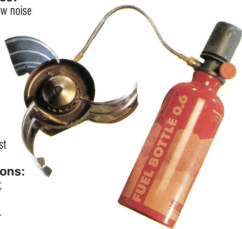
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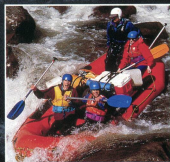
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OUTLAWED

Legal threat to rucksack sports

New laws threaten all outdoors users

Regulations setting conditions on the use of National Parks and catchment areas in New South Wales with significant implications for bushwalking, canoeing and rock sports were gazetted at the end of August.

The National Parks and Wildlife (Land Management) Regulation was updated in late August without consultation of recreational park users. The Regulation specifies a number of activities prohibited in National Parks and other conservation reserves without first obtaining permission from the National Parks & Wildlife Service. Clause 19 of the Regulation states: 'A person must not in a park... (d) engage in any activity or recreational pursuit which involves risking the safety of the person or the safety of other persons.' The exception is when consent has been granted. The Regulation specifically refers to abseiling, BASE jumping, bungee jumping, rockclimbing, caving, parachuting, white-water boating and hang-gliding.

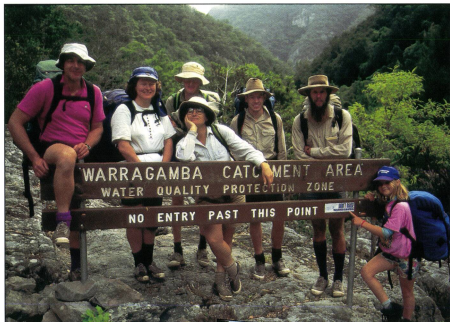
The provisions have since been the subject of a campaign led by rockclimbers and abseilers channelled through the Australian Democrats' Richard Jones, who has collected thousands of signatures protesting the ban.

According to the NPWS the regulations are necessary to prevent legal action being taken against it in the event of an accident on land under its jurisdiction. There has been no indication that the service intends to grant blanket exemptions to people wishing to undertake 'risky' activities in a responsible manner and who are willing to accept responsibility for the risks involved although few people can conceive how the bans could be strictly enforced and most doubt that the NPWS will try.

In a related but separate move, similar Draconian regulations have been imposed on bushwalkers in an attempt to control entry into Sydney's catchment areas. Bushwalkers noticed—just before it was passed, again without consultation—that the Sydney Water (Catchment) Regulation would prevent 'picnicking', lighting fires, swimming and Li-Loing in a 300 000 hectare area of the Warragamba catchment. This area extends from the Ruined Castle near Katoomba south to near Wombeyan Caves and includes most of the southern section of the Blue Mountains National Park and large parts of the Kanangra-Boyd and Nattai National Parks.

Signs were erected last summer along the Kowmung and Cocks Rivers warning of Sydney Water's intention to prevent access to long-established walking corridors through the catchments close to the stored water. The new regulations were also to provide for on-the-spot fines for illegal entry.

Urgent meetings and last-minute lobbying by bushwalkers caused the on-the-spot fines and bans on 'picnicking' and camping to be



Child making a citizen's (mass-) arrest? (Lower Kowmung River area, Blue Mountains, New South Wales.) Andrew Cox. Right, former employees George Reid (left), Herb Septon and Noel Reid back at Cooinbil, Australian Capital Territory, for a reunion. Harry Hill

removed from the Regulation. The other restrictions, however, still apply. Sydney Water views bushwalkers as a threat to the water-supply, unable to bury their toilet waste and potentially responsible for bushfires. Bushwalkers have defended their responsible use of the areas in question and have pointed out that poorly treated sewage from major towns such as Lithgow, Goulburn and Katoomba flows through the National Parks into Sydney's water-supply.

At a meeting with Sydney Water staff, bushwalkers were assured that until signs were erected they could continue to use the areas. However, during a much-publicised walk with State Premier Bob Carr along the Kowmung River, conservationist Milo Dunphy lit a fire for a lunch-time cup of tea and later received a letter warning him of the illegal nature of his actions.

Outdoors users everywhere are urged to protest the NSW National Parks bans by writing to Pam Allan, Minister for the Environment, Level 9, 11 Elizabeth St, Sydney 2000. Anyone wishing to protest the Sydney Water regulations should write to Craig Knowles, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Level 33, 1 Farrer Pl, Sydney, NSW 2000.



Corrections and amplifications

In John Chapman's track notes to lesser-known walks in the Kosciuszko National Park in *Wild* no 57 ('In Kosciuszko's Shadow') mention is made of the ruin of Cooinbil Hut on the Coleman Caves walk (pages 50-51). In fact, this hut—which was all but destroyed by a fallen tree in December 1987—has been restored by the Kosciuszko Huts Association under the guidance of Harry Hill. The restoration was carried out by 25 work parties over three years and entailed thousands of hours of voluntary labour.

Ten kilometres to the south-east of Cooinbil Hut is the oldest structure in Kosciuszko National Park, Old Currango Hut. Dating from the 1870s, it too was in danger of being declared a ruin in 1987 but has since been restored using many of the original timbers. Hill intends to publish accounts of the



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Alpine 900		slant-wall, 2 security pockets, 3D shaped foot section, neck muff	bushwalking, cold-weather camping	900 gm	1.6 kg	4 season	\$329
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restoration works on the huts, including the huts' histories and stories told to him by those who have occupied the huts at various times during the last 60 years.

VICTORIA

Great Dividing Trail

A Federal Government grant provided to assist with the establishment of the Great Dividing Trail through Victoria's gold-fields has been well spent. The first section of track—from Castlemaine to Daylesford—is now fully completed. The track is clearly signposted and can be easily followed for the entire 50 kilometres—an ideal overnight walk. A professionally produced map titled *Dry Diggings Track* is available and sells for about \$6.00. Further information regarding the map or membership of the group responsible for the track can be obtained by contacting the Great Dividing Trail Association, PO Box 429, Daylesford, Vic 3460.

John Chapman

Hoppet successful despite storms

The 1995 Kangaroo Hoppet cross-country ski race at Falls Creek on 26 August came close to being a disaster when a sudden thunderstorm washed away much of the snow the evening before the event. Organisers and track groomers worked a near-miracle during the night to set a 14 kilometre loop linking the dam wall, Watchbed Creek and Heathy Spur. Against all expectations the weather turned out to be perfect on the day although the snow was very wet and soft, which made for a slow and gruelling event.

This year a record 1600 skiers—including 200 from 25 foreign countries—took part in the 42 kilometre Kangaroo Hoppet, the 14 kilometre Australian Birkebeiner and the 7 kilometre Joey Hoppet junior event. The Kangaroo Hoppet is the first in a series of 12

Competitors in the Kangaroo Hoppet were required to complete three arduous laps of the circuit which was described by Australia's top-ranked skier Anthony Evans as 'the toughest ski course I've ever done, either overseas or here in Australia'. Swiss racer



Winners of the 1995 Kangaroo Hoppet: Staffan Larsson (left; third), André Jungen (first), and Jukka Hartonen (second). Glenn Tempest. Below, wind assistance for Ben Galbraith. Eric Philips

Worldloppet ski races held around the world each year and is easily Australia's premier cross-country ski event.

André Jungen powered to the finish in 1 hour 41 minutes, almost four minutes in front of Jukka Hartonen from Finland. Staffan Larsson from Sweden skated into third position less than a minute later. Evans was the first Australian home in 2 hours 35 minutes; he finished fifth. The women's event was won easily by Maria Theurl from

The Green Ice Traverse

After flying to the east coast of Greenland we began the paddling leg from the town of Angmagssalik. Larry Gray, Ben Galbraith and I plied our small kayaks between towering icebergs, over gravelly brash-ice, through old pack-ice, across ice-choked fiords and past ice-capped mountains. Ice, ice and more ice. One hundred and ten kilometres and six days later we reached the frontier town of Isortoq, a small village hewn into the rock just six kilometres from the start of our ice-cap journey.

After collecting petrol for the stove and a few last provisions we paddled the last section to the ice-cap. Here the ice plunges headlong into the fiord. A 50 metre vertical face, as blue as a tropical lagoon, gave birth to house-sized icebergs before our very eyes. This amphitheatre of bedlam provided the backdrop for the last camp that the expedition team and film crew shared. Ben, adventure cameraman Wade Fairley and I were poised to cross the ice-cap while Larry (kayaker and cameraman), director Michael Balson and production manager Mary O'Malley spent the next month filming the people, culture and beauty of eastern Greenland.

Towing our kayaks as sleds, our first week on the ice proved to be extremely arduous. Climbing steeply, our path was littered with icy hummocks, melt-streams and crevasses. By the end of the fifth day we had covered less than 40 kilometres and the coastal mountains were still within sight. Plodding on doggedly, we finally cleared the coastal zone and sledged up on to the ice-cap proper. As the surface was too soft to make good

progress during the day we switched to night travel to make use of the firmer conditions. However, we had to contend with colder temperatures and—as the summer ebbed in this land of the midnight sun—with darkness; my fingers are still numb as I type.

The weather was generally rotten. Continual rain on the coast meant heavy snowfall at our higher altitude, with heavy mist and strong winds. At times the horizon was completely obliterated, making compass navigation frustrating to say the least. For a week we saw neither sun, moon nor stars.

When the wind swung to our backs we flew the wonderful Quadri-floils. These steerable kites are a breakthrough in wind-assisted polar travel. Weighing less than two kilograms and with surface areas of only four square metres, they pulled us and our 80 kilogram sleds in winds as gentle as five knots. In all, we covered almost half our total distance of 540 kilometres using the 'Quads'.

The last five days of our journey were again slow and laborious. Having sighted the western coastal mountains, however, we were inspired to push hard despite a seemingly endless ocean of 30 metre high serac walls, gullies and crevasses.

After 28 days on the ice we lowered our multilateral kayaks and abseiled the 20 metre high terminal ice-face on to the sandy bank of our exit river. To be camped on solid ground, surrounded by sheer ice-cliffs, waterfalls and a raging, icy river was a blissful experience. The following day, after a short paddle on glacier-

fed white water, we joined the two kayaks to form a raft and the three of us, with most of our 200 kilograms of cargo lashed on top, paddled the final 30 kilometres downstream to our destination—Kangerlussuaq.

Already, our Green Ice Traverse expedition has been hailed as an innovative breakthrough in polar travel. Our combination of ski, kayak and Quadri-floil proved to be extremely lightweight, efficient and accessible and enabled us to complete the first unassisted sea-to-sea crossing of Greenland in 20 years. ■

Eric Philips





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Austria in 2 hours 56 minutes, an amazing eight minutes in front of Swiss skier Beatrice Gruenfelder. Karin Lamberg-Skog from Sweden skied into third position in 3 hours 17 minutes, while Australian Kerryn Rim claimed fourth position in 3 hours 24 minutes.

Australians dominated the 14 kilometre Australian Birkebeiner, which was won by Sean Donohue in just over 56 minutes, followed by Michael Brennan who crossed the line less than a minute later. Gregor McLennan was third. The women's event was won by Australian Jenny Griffiths in 1 hour 4 seconds with Katja Zibert from Slovenia placing second in 1 hour 10 seconds, closely followed by Belinda Phillips less than half a second behind.

Glenn Tempest

TASMANIA

Acropolis deaths

Two brothers from Hobart in Tasmania were killed in late September while scrambling to

Wild Diary

Information about rucksack-sports events for publication in this department should be sent to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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1996				
January	27-28	High-O, Kandra R	NSW	(06) 248 7142
February	3-4	Australian 24-hour Championships R	Tas	(002) 28 8620
March	2-4	Cradle to Coast Ultra Challenge M	Tas	(002) 44 5222
		2 6-hour R	Vic	(03) 9890 4352
		3 6-hour R	Vic	(03) 9890 4352
		9 Upside Down 12-hour R	NSW	(02) 874 0226
		23 Paddy Pallin 6-hour R	ACT	(06) 248 7142
		30 12-hour R	Vic	(03) 9890 4352
	30-31	VCC beginners' and lead-climbing course (week one) RC	Vic	(03) 9428 5298
April	20	12-hour R	WA	(08) 275 4734
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		8- and 24-hour R	Vic	(03) 9890 4352
June	1	Paddy Pallin 6-hour R	NSW	(02) 874 0226
		6-hour R	Vic	(03) 9890 4352
	1-2	WA 24-hour Championships R	WA	(08) 275 4734
	29-30	SA 24-hour Championships R	SA	(08) 268 8732

■ Bushwalking C canoeing M multisports R rogaining RC rockclimbing S skiing

WILD INFORMATION

the summit of the Acropolis in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. Dion and Matthew Clifford (aged 25 and 20, respectively) spent the night of Tuesday 26 September at the popular Pine Valley Hut, one day's walk from the southern end of the Overland Track. A party of walkers from Sydney also based at the hut later reported that the brothers had set out on Wednesday to complete the relatively straightforward six kilometre day walk to the summit of the



Ben Galbraith (left), Wade Fairley and Eric Phillips during their Green Ice Traverse. Phillips collection

Acropolis. The party became concerned when the pair, both of whom had previous bushwalking experience, did not return by sundown. The alarm was raised when the Sydney walkers returned to the rangers' station on Thursday afternoon and a search for the pair began the following morning. The bodies of the two walkers were discovered at the foot of the peak's summit cliffs on Saturday morning. Searchers—who included Parks & Wildlife Service staff, police and local bushwalkers—believe that the brothers slipped from snowy and icy terrain near the summit.

The deaths bring to four the number of walkers killed in the park during the last five years. While such deaths have in the past usually been the result of exposure, all four recent deaths have been due to falls; all have been of people in their early 20s and have occurred away from marked tracks.

OVERSEAS

Not so green

Australian adventurer Eric Phillips, who recently crossed the inhospitable Ellesmere Island in Canada's far north (see his account of the journey in *Wild* no 55), has made another gruelling ice-cap traverse. During July and August he, Himalayan kayaker Ben Galbraith and adventure cameraman Wade Fairley took 28 days to ski across Greenland in the footsteps of pioneer Australian explorer John Rymill (who made the journey in 1931). It was the first unsupported traverse of the country in 20 years. See the box on page 17 for his personal report of this important trip. ■

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



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WOOD-CHIP POLICY

States try to hoodwink Federal Government

Forest debate heats up, again

The debate over the wood-chipping of Australia's old-growth forests flared again in October as conservation groups declared themselves to be the 'enemy' of the Federal Government. The three-week consultation period over the draft federal plan to protect some areas of old-growth forest began badly when a delegation of environmentalists found that the Federal Government was unable to produce detailed maps of the areas to be spared. After the first consultative meeting Federal Environment Minister John Faulkner accused green groups of bullying while conservationists claimed that the Federal Government had shown little concern for the poor quality of information supplied to it by State forest agencies. Within a week, however, John Faulkner had acknowledged that the States appeared to be disrupting the process of determining which forests should be saved by withholding important information.

Early analysis of the areas marked for protection showed that at least three States had not adhered to federal criteria for assessing the value of forests. Tasmania in particular was accused of 'padding' its submission with slivers of roadside bushland and 100 000 hectares of button-grass plains in order to meet the Federal Government's target of protecting 15 per cent of the total area of forest which existed at the beginning of European settlement. Conservationists in New South Wales said that 900 000 hectares of previously logged forest were included in that State's tally while forest areas on the register of the National Estate were not to be protected. Green groups in Victoria threatened major blockades of East Gippsland forests if the Federal Government did not rein in the activities of that State's logging industry. As *Wild* went to press the Federal Government was considering its final decision.

New conservation fund mooted

Moves are afoot among outdoors industry businesses to create a joint fund for worthy conservation projects. Modelled on the United States Conservation Alliance, the fund would be made up of contributions (of perhaps 0.1 per cent of annual turnover) from many businesses within the industry. A number of well-known equipment manufacturers and retailers have backed the plan, which would see money donated from a central pool to aid groups and projects making a positive contribution to the environment. The plan was proposed by, among others, *Wild* special adviser Bob Burton.

Albatross's goose cooked?

The Macquarie Island subspecies of the wandering albatross has been listed as an endangered species as its numbers continue



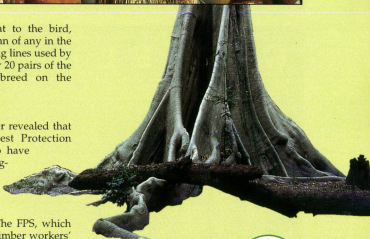
to shrink. The greatest threat to the bird, which has the largest wing-span of any in the world, is the bait set on the long lines used by the tuna fishing industry. Only 20 pairs of the birds are now known to breed on the subantarctic island.

A fistful of dollars

A report in *The Age* in October revealed that the largely pro-logging Forest Protection Society—a group claiming to have grass-roots support among logging-industry workers and the towns which the industry 'supports'—is substantially funded by the National Association of Forest Industries. The FPS, which was prominent in last year's timber workers' blockade of Parliament House in Canberra, relied on NAFI 'grants' for more than two-thirds of its funding. The Australian Conservation Foundation described the FPS as 'a front for the wood-chippers'.

Two-in-one solution

A CSIRO scientist has claimed that better farming practices could help to confront two of Australia's major environmental problems—land degradation and the greenhouse effect. Australia's soils are becoming increasingly devoid of organic matter; part of this organic matter is carbon, which is finding its way into the atmosphere as the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide. Roger Swift from the CSIRO's Division of Soils has asserted that restoring the organic content of Australia's soils will not only improve their productivity but also act as a 'sink' for atmospheric carbon, thus helping to alleviate the greenhouse effect.



Cape York Peninsula rainforest giant. **Top**, Aurukun dancers. Kerry Trapnell

QUEENSLAND

Cape York co-operation

A novel 'black/green alliance' between the Cape York Land Council, the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society is seeking Federal Government funding for the purchase of pastoral leases (as they come up for sale) that cover ecologically and culturally sensitive land. The effort is part of a push to establish Cape York as an indigenous conservation zone. The first step



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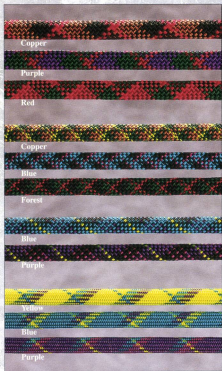
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in the plan entails the protection of 1200 kilometres of wilderness coastline which forms part of the 3.6 million hectare Cape York Peninsula Conservation Zone recently announced by the State Labor Government. See Action Box item 1 for more information on this important campaign.

Rain-forest call

Professor Len Webb, a veteran ecologist and pioneer researcher of Australia's northern rain forests, has called for a change in priorities in the management of the country's tropical forests.

'Tropical rain forest...management should be planned for the long term by natural scientists rather than in response to short-term economic goals', he said at the opening of the Tropical Forest Research Centre at Atherton in September. (See the Editorial in this issue for more on the destruction and poor management of Australia's World Heritage rain forests.)

NEW SOUTH WALES

Kowmung victory

The proposal to raise the wall of the Warragamba Dam has been dumped by the State Government following intense campaigning by environment groups led by the Kowmung Committee. (See the background briefing regarding the issue in Green Pages, Wild no 56.) Bushwalkers were concerned that the proposal would lead to the flooding and erosion of popular bushwalking country in the southern Blue Mountains.

State Premier Bob Carr is a keen bushwalker whose love of the Kowmung area—along with the mounting cost of the Sydney Olympics—is believed to have played a part in the decision to dump the expensive dam-raising proposal.

Wollangambe threat

An extension to an underground coal-mine in the headwaters of the Wollangambe River may be on the cards after an application for a mining exploration licence for an area in the Newnes State Forest was lodged recently. The exploration may result in the building of roads through the region for the purpose of taking core samples near Dubandno Ridge and the environmentally sensitive Goochs Crater on the edge of the Wollmli wilderness. Environmentalists hope to have this area added to the adjacent Blue Mountains National Park. See Action Box item 2.

Bush buy-back

The Australian Bush Heritage Fund recently purchased 120 hectares of remnant bushland in the Bega valley in south-eastern New South Wales (a region subject to extensive wood-chipping) as part of a nation-wide programme to 'buy back the bush'. The bush block is home to dozens of native species including the threatened powerful owl. See Action Box item 3.

VICTORIA

State decision

The Victorian branch of the ALP raised the ire of the federal party in September by

proposing far stronger measures to prevent the logging of old-growth forest than have been endorsed in Canberra. The Wilderness Society congratulated the State ALP for 'showing courage and vision'.

Mallee bull

The draft Mallee Parks Management Plan, which covers such parks as the Hattah-Kulkyne, Wyperfeld and Murray-Sunset National Parks in the State's north-west, has been criticised by the Victorian National Parks Association. The plan recommends that a number of management tracks be opened to the public and upgraded for use by two-wheel-drive vehicles, a move which the VNPA claims will seriously degrade the wilderness values of much of the area. One of the upgraded roads would effectively split the remote and inhospitable Big Desert wilderness into two. The region affected by the management plan includes about 40 per cent of the area of Victoria's National Parks, half of which is at present designated as wilderness. See Action Box item 4.

Key coupe saved by potoro

A section of bush at the centre of efforts to halt old-growth logging in East Gippsland has been saved from destruction by the confirmation that it harbours the endangered long-footed potoro. The Ellery Creek catchment, which contains East Gippsland's largest tree, a spectacular three-tiered waterfall and a number of other endangered species (all 'overlooked' in previous surveys by the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources), was due to be logged last spring. The potoro was discovered as a result of a thorough investigation of the catchment by the Concerned Residents of East Gippsland.

Action Box

Readers can take action on the following matters covered in Green Pages in this issue.

1 For more information, contact the Cape York Indigenous Environment Foundation at PO Box 2496, Cairns, Qld 4870; phone (07) 51 9077 or 1800 62 3548; or point your World Wide Web browser to <http://www.peg.apc.org/~twscains/capeyork>.

2 To voice your opposition to the exploration proposal, write to Bob Martin, Minister for Mineral Resources & Fisheries, Level 12, 1 Francis St, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010.

3 To obtain more information on the Australian Bush Heritage programme, or to send a donation, write to GPO Box 101, Hobart, Tas 7001; phone (002) 51 5475, fax (002) 51 2491.

4 For more information, contact the VNPA, 10 Parliament Pl, East Melbourne, Vic 3002.

5 Contact the Wilderness Society (Tasmania) at 130 Davey St, Hobart, Tas 7000.

6 Contact Friends of the Chuditch by writing to PO Box 74, Balaling, WA 6253; or phone/fax (097) 64 1034.

TASMANIA

'New' National Parks on the way?

Tasmania's Public Land Use Commission (PLUC) has just released its first set of recommendations regarding Tasmania's reserved lands, which is being seen by some as little more than a complex renaming exercise. It recommends, for example, that existing reserves on the Tasman Peninsula be collectively known as the 'Tasman National Park' and that a 'Western Tiers National Park' and a 'Bruny National Park' be 'created' over existing reserves.

The proposal also recommends that Tasmania's World Heritage National Parks become a recognised 'wilderness area', a concept welcomed by the Wilderness Society which prefers, however, to keep the traditional names of these National Parks (Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair, Wild Rivers and South-West).

The commission's final recommendations have gone to the Minister for National Parks, John Cleary. It remains to be seen what the notoriously antiwilderness Groom Government does with them.

Geoff Law

Fifty-cabin lodge on Lake St Clair?

In September the Tasmanian Government and a developer released plans to erect a 50-cabin tourist lodge at Pump House Point at the south-eastern end of Lake St Clair. Aimed very much at the upper end of the market—a night's accommodation is expected to cost as much as \$400—the lodge would lie between the lake's dunes and an adjacent lagoon at the site of a disused hydroelectric pumping station.

In response to public concerns about the impact of such a development on the quiet wilderness character of this World Heritage Area the developers have categorically ruled out the use of aeroplanes, helicopters or power boats. They claim that the lodge will not worsen the visual impact of the existing structures on the site and that everything will be done sensitively and in keeping with the site's beautiful environs.

The Wilderness Society has expressed scepticism at these claims and is concerned about the impact of the additional 7-8000 people the project will bring to the region every year—a significant extra burden on walking tracks, lakeside facilities and the area's fragile ecology. Of major concern is the possible demand for additional infrastructure in the form of jetties, walking tracks and shelters around the lake.

An environmental impact statement and management plan will be released shortly. See Action Box item 5.

GL

World Heritage Area report

The Wilderness Society has claimed that 19 000 hectares of forest with World Heritage qualities around the northern and eastern fringes of the existing World Heritage Area are threatened by wood-chipping. Some of the planned logging coupes in these areas are believed to measure a kilometre by a kilometre.

A new Federal Government report prepared by consultants from the University



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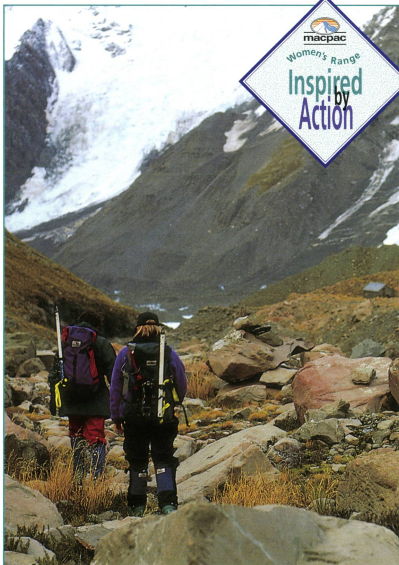
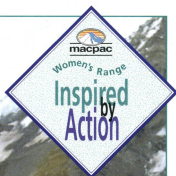


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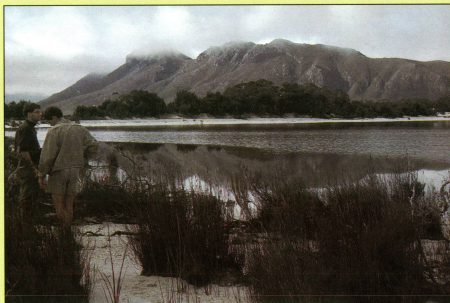
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Bushwalkers admire Lake Pedder before it was flooded. Geoff Mosley. Right, the measure of a chuditch. Western Australian Department of Conservation & Land Management

of Tasmania has identified a total of about 75 000 hectares of outstanding forest that should be added to the World Heritage Area, 19 000 hectares of which lie outside draft 'protected zones'. The report recommends a new boundary that would protect much of the Great Western Tiers and the South-west.

GL

Pedder set-back

Hopes for clear support from the Federal Government for the campaign to restore the flooded Lake Pedder were dashed last spring when an important report concluded that there are more pressing priorities. However, the report—*Inquiry into the Proposal to Drain and Restore Lake Pedder*—did express that the plan was technically feasible and would enhance the World Heritage values of Tasmania's South-west.

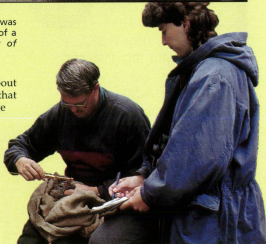
Conservationists have lamented the failure of the House of Representatives committee which prepared the report to carry out an objective analysis of the pros and cons of restoration; instead, the report is merely a judgement of the political feasibility of the plan which, given the hostility of both the Tasmanian Government and the Opposition, is low.

Supporters of the restoration campaign have taken heart from the report's findings about the practical feasibility of the plan and intend to focus on building nation-wide public support for the scheme.

Geoff Mosley

The big whale?

Many bushwalkers will be familiar with Cockle Creek, the eastern end of the popular and famous South Coast Track. The Tasmanian Government is planning to commemorate the significance of Cockle Creek—a former whaling centre—by the erection of a six metre



long bronze whale. The sculpture is to be funded by the government with \$45 000 extracted from National Park entry fees (which apply to all Tasmanian National Parks).

GL

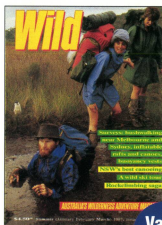
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Quoll toll

Criticism of the Department of Conservation & Land Management over its handling of the issue of native-forest logging is increasing, with concerns centred around the limited protection afforded to endangered species such as the chuditch, the rarest of Australia's four species of quoll. Once relatively abundant across Australia, the chuditch is now confined to the south-west corner of Western Australia. The Friends of the Chuditch is an organisation dedicated to developing a community-based programme for the protection of the species as well as helping to draw attention to threats to the animals from logging and feral predators. See Action Box item 6 to find out how you can help. ■

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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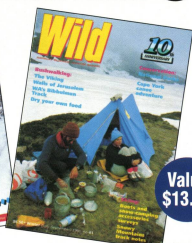
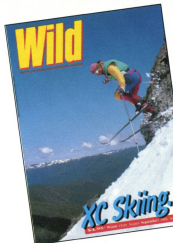


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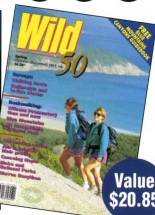
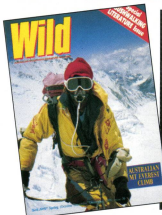
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ON THE ROAD

Getting there can be half the fun, by *Quentin Chester*



Unless you happen to live in the middle of the bush, your excursions with a rucksack are inevitably bracketed by journeys of another kind. Australia has no shortage of natural attractions but there are many flat paddocks in between. Unavoidably a large slice of the time allocated to enjoying the outdoors is actually spent holed up in transport of some kind. This might seem a waste of precious hours yet these stints on the road need not be dull. Often they are the most memorable part of a trip.

In many respects the open road is the last refuge for those of a free-wheeling spirit. Whatever romance might have been associated with train and plane travel has been lost as passengers are packaged, processed and sent on their way like a boatload of live sheep. While overfamiliarity may have created a certain contempt for car travel, there is still a lot to be said for the

liberating effects of pulling clear of the suburbs and hurtling down some dark back road, taking in the kind of music, food and conversation outlawed in respectable society.

Road trips are not, however, always memorable for the best of reasons. Often the recollection is of a death-defying kind that makes the adrenalin rush gained from dangling from a rope or screaming on skis down a steep gully seem like a dribble. Trying to make it out of town at the start of Easter usually provides enough close shaves to satisfy even the most hardened thrill seeker. And being tail-gated by a convoy of semis or overtaking a jack-knifing caravan can instantly expand one's personal definition of an adventure holiday.

Another sure-fire way to up the stakes is to hitch-hike. A fair number of the kilometres I travelled in my youth were spent in the cabs of Kenworths helping to keep drivers awake.

Off the road? (Or, at least, cause for reflection.)
Andrew Cox

Hitching is, of course, not without its pitfalls. For every genial truckie encountered be prepared to meet a religious zealot or a travelling fertiliser salesman. Not to mention some authentic crazies.

Many years ago I hitched a lift from the northern Flinders Ranges with a pair of goat hunters in a Falcon ute. There is nothing quite like careering down a lonely outback road while sitting wedged between two dope-smoking, beer-swilling shooters. It wasn't just their fixed grins that worried me, nor the way the bloke on my left kept rolling his eyes as he waved his gun out the window. No, what really put me off was looking into the back of the ute and seeing the chain-saw. On the wheel arch nearby there were what appeared to be bright red smudges of blood. The two

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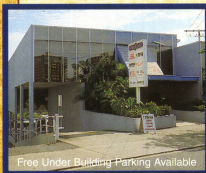
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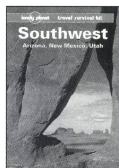
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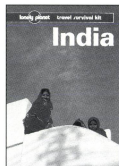


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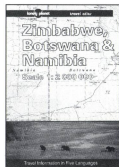
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things may not have been related but I didn't linger to find out. At the next town I jumped ship.

Even cadging lifts off people you know can have its problems. There is always the possibility that mild-mannered acquaintances will suddenly turn reckless. Something snaps and they decide they've been living in the slow lane for too long. Such was my predicament on one of many all-night rides from Adelaide to Mt Hotham. Just out of Ouyen the bloke behind the wheel started driving as though there were no tomorrow and too few yesterdays. His main aim was to overtake at all costs. It didn't matter whether we were approaching a crest or facing a blaze of oncoming headlights. Blind corners were a favourite. In 12 hours of travelling we probably spent more time on the right-hand side of the road than on the left. Admittedly it was hard to tell as my only view of the road was through the gaps between the fingers pressed over my eyes.

Aside from the human factor, fate also plays its part in car travel. A few years back, after a weekend of climbing at Mt Arapiles, we slung our gear into the wagon for the long drive home. It was a grey, mid-winter evening. On the cliff we had been buffeted by a bitter southerly scouring across the Wimmera steppes. Our chalk-caked fingertips were still blue with cold as the old Peugeot lumbered westward, the heater cranked up high. Chugging towards the last of the sun we began contemplating the styrofoam coffee and deep-fried items awaiting us at the roadhouse 100 kilometres away.

A few minutes later a pair of headlights approached in the distance. As they came closer the car to which they were attached slewed menacingly across the narrow strip of bitumen. There was a little surge of relief as the vehicles passed one another without colliding. But a split second later there was a dull thwack. Suddenly the space normally housing the windscreen was admitting a blast of icy wind. Tiny cubes of glass filled our laps.

We lurched to a halt. After clearing the worst of the debris we rugged up in parkas and woolly hats and continued into the night. Passing through the 60 kilometres an hour barrier the wind-chill became brutal. We reefed out our sleeping-bags and drew them up to our chins as the bitter wind hummed around our ears. 'So this is what a bivvy on Everest is like!' somebody shouted from beneath a mound of insulation. A couple of kilometres further along the road we experienced a simulated blizzard as flying insects began streaming into the car like krill into a feeding whale.

Two hours later we coasted on to the driveway of an Ampol service station. At first I thought the looks of alarm from the other customers were sympathy for our ordeal. But as we arrived decked out in Balacavas and sun-glasses they probably mistook us for some paramilitary sect running guns across the border. Just to be on the safe side we shed a few layers of clothing before joining the queue at the take-away counter. In the glow of the hot-foot cabinet I noticed that my companions' cheeks were covered with the assorted body parts of small, splattered invertebrates.

THE WILD LIFE

Stoked with cholesterol and equipped with an 'emergency windscreen' we resumed our odyssey. The windscreen was in fact a large sheet of Cellophane-like plastic. Taped into place it looked like an oversized packet of chips. Even when the car was stationary our new windscreen crinkled loudly in the breeze. At a modest cruising speed the clatter was unbearable. For the rest of the journey it was as though a squadron of cicadas was roosting in each ear.

At least all this happened after an otherwise successful weekend. Alas, some trips never eventuated thanks to various mechanical mishaps. In the early days most of my climbing and bushwalking associates drove clapped-out Cortinas or Vauxhalls. Every departure for a weekend away was a kind of roulette as we drove hell for leather in the hope of reaching our destination before a head gasket blew or a bearing seized. Inevitably there were occasions when we never reached our objective. The whole weekend was then passed playing snooker in some drowsy country pub while waiting for the local mechanics to scrounge parts or return from a goat-shooting trip.

My own contribution to group transport was a 1963 Beetle. It had a bile-green paint job, dysfunctional electrics and the kind of engine purr normally associated with a Fokker Friendship. Despite its manifold shortcomings I became hopelessly sentimental about this vehicle. Partly, I guess, because together we survived so many near-death experiences—mainly when attempting to pass trucks and forgetting to take account of a head wind. It was also the ideal car for someone who was mechanically illiterate. Despite all my neglect and abuse it refused to give up. As somebody once said: 'It's amazing how these cars keep going with so much wrong with them.'

Among the quirks of my Vee Dub was its fatal attraction to wildlife. Perhaps its vaguely animal-like appearance lured curious creatures into its path. The dimness of the headlights made it impossible to see what one was about to run over. But one got accustomed to certain seasonal rhythms. In winter mice plagues produced a staccato thumping akin to that created by those reflective lumps that divide the lanes on freeways. Rabbits were often profuse in spring and sent a more pronounced, though intermittent, reverberation through the chassis. Foxes were louder still. But the most shattering effects were caused by kangaroos that sprang out of the shadows and smacked into the mudguards with a sickening thud. Such distressing moments highlighted the merits of a 12-volt electrical system as opposed to the thoroughly inadequate one that fuelled the Beetle's feeble lanterns.

For all my car's idiosyncratic charms, it was not good at ferrying large groups of people with a mountain of gear over long distances. For such tasks it's hard to go past an old Holden. Not those poney Commodores but the classic Kingswoods with huge bench seats, cavernous boots, six turning cylinders and a high beam that turns night into day.

Let's face it. You're not going to reclaim the wild, renegade spirit of the open road sitting

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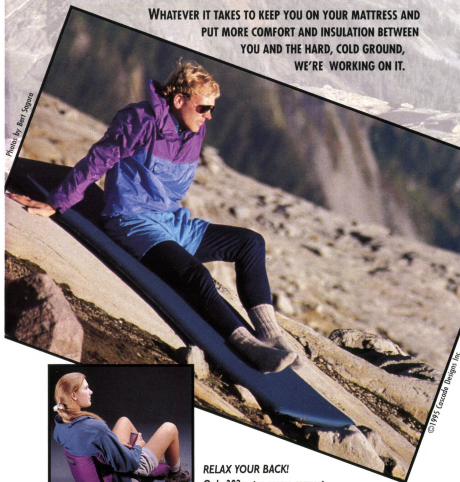
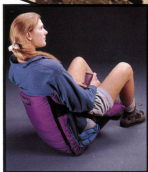


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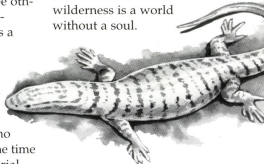
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THE WILD LIFE

in a Morris 1100. Don't bother with designer four-wheel-drives. They always look out of place in the bush, anyway. Forget about anything with carpet on the floor, electric windows or velour upholstery—the kinds of vehicles you might not want to share with a bunch of muddy outdoor types who come back from a trip smelling like polecats. And nothing too glitzy that's likely to attract thieves and car strippers while you're away on a four-day walk.

No, what's required is a trusty HQ. The kind of lumbering battleship that will shuttle you and four others across the continent in style. A car with a real dashboard to put your feet on and a back seat that's wide enough to load up with firewood, a bundle of skis or an extra passenger or two to help share the fuel bill. A car with true character and built for comfort. A car with rust holes to let the water out when the door seals perish.

Having additional personnel on board for long hauls allows certain responsibilities to be shared. Apart from rotating the routine functions of driving, navigating and sleeping, it's helpful to appoint somebody to keep a look-out for unforeseen complications like highway patrol cars. Other tasks, including feeding the cassette player and providing the in-flight buffet, can also be delegated. After a few hundred kilometres the whole operation becomes as slick as anything seen on the bridge of the starship *Enterprise*.

With the right kind of quorum there is also the opportunity to pass some time in conversation. Admittedly a lot of the babble one hears tends to be mundane. Yet as you roll through the night with only a white line to gaze at there is scope even for the more taciturn passengers to loosen up. Under the cover of darkness strange threads of thought can be followed. Odd life histories emerge. Gossip is traded and world problems are solved. You don't have to make a lot of sense or eye contact just as long as the person behind the wheel keeps his or her eyelids apart.

Cruising across the country may capture the thrill of the open road but that thrill does rely on your faith in technology and human judgement. From one point of view an exhilarating drive is really about spending several hours narrowly avoiding fatal collisions with total strangers. Why is it that so many people think nothing of putting their lives on the line in the family sedan? Why do these same people believe that anyone who might want a little adventure climbing a mountain is some psycho with a death-wish?

Ultimately the value of road travel is to make educated risks taken in the bush seem like the height of responsible behaviour. Especially compared to the lunatic acts seen every day on our highways and byways. It may be better to travel than to arrive but it's even better to travel with a pack than to drive. ■

Quentin Chester

Quentin Chester (see Contributors in Wild no 3) writes regularly about going bush. He is the co-author of *The Outdoors Companion*, *The Kimberley—Horizons of Stone* and, most recently, *Australia's Wild Islands*, which explores the diversity of 28 of Australia's islands from the tropics to the sub-Antarctic.

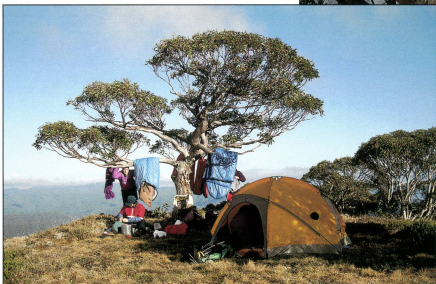
First STEPS

Quentin Chester advises beginners how to 'get out there and do it'

We humans are made for walking. Over the ages our knack of putting one foot in front of the other has become more than just a useful adaptation for catching food and running away from things. There are those who suggest that walking is essential to our humanness. Some even go so far as to insist that the true path to wisdom is the one that is *trod*. In his paean to perambulation, *The Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin argues that a wandering life is an antidote to the 'malaise of settlement'. He says that we are designed 'for a career of seasonal journeys on foot through a blistering land of thorn-scrub or desert'. During the last 30 or so years a new understanding has emerged of the importance of our wild places as a reservoir of the way things used to be; not just of the vanishing plants, animals and untouched landscapes, but also of the refreshing simplicity of life without the mechanical life-support into which we all seem to have plugged ourselves.

These days opportunities to shrug off the machines, take a deep breath of unpolluted air and get our hands dirty are not necessarily easy to come by. The globe has become a diabolically cluttered place. Much of the territory through which people once roamed on foot is now fenced off or out of bounds. Meanwhile that whirling treadmill known as technology has little time for humble pedestrians. Instead we are tethered to terminals. Meals are delivered to our door. Our news is read to us. Roads are built without foot-paths. And as we hurtle down bitumen and information highways we are urged to sneak second-hand glimpses of the world through the shimmering windows supplied by Sony, General Motors and Microsoft.

Yet in the face of these assorted pressures there are itinerants who seek out an earthier version of reality. People whose preferred pastime is to travel on



It's hard to beat a good campsite with a view to match. (On Mt Speculation, Victoria.) Glenn van der Knijff. **Right**, young bushwalkers on an untracked alpine ridge. (On Mt Loch, Victoria.) Chris Baxter

foot in those remaining tracts of country where nature prevails. People who value the satisfaction engendered by a little physical toil and the simplicity of living out of a rucksack. People who treasure the spectacle of a mountain sunrise and the smell of the bush after a summer storm. People who respond to the rhythms of walking—rhythms with the power to liberate both body and spirit.

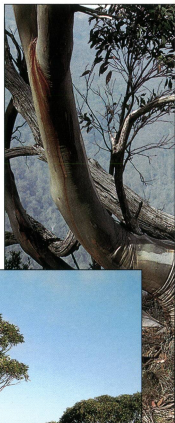
THE RIGHT APPROACH

But how do you take the first steps into this 'other' world? Where do you acquire the necessary qualifications to be a late-twentieth-century nomad? Well, the most important skill cannot be learnt from a manual or by roaming a CD-ROM. The first requirement for bushwalking is not being able to lug a 40 kilogram pack, follow a compass

bearing or create smoke by rubbing sticks together. No, the secret of being a successful nomad is to be able to appreciate—and interpret—one's natural surroundings. This is not a skill that you can have couriered to your door and pay for with a credit card. But don't panic—we humans come fully equipped with the right software for picking it up. After all, we were built for the bush.

Know the bush

Accordingly, the best way to get started is to toss this magazine (carefully) aside and head for the hills. Almost any old piece of bush will do just as long as you're out of sight of suburbs, freeways and thronging crowds. Inhale the untainted air and start walking. The idea is to lose yourself without getting lost—at least not permanently (let someone know where you hope to go and when you expect to be back). A map could be handy for your first foray but leave your watch behind and don't bother with guidebooks and other distractions. Watch the weather as you amble along. Consider the shape of the





terrain and the changes of vegetation. Keep an eye on the sun.

Unencumbered by the trappings of home and the burdens of routine you can meet the natural world on its own terms. By learning to read the signs it becomes possible to recapture a kind of intuitive feel for the land. This process—the clichéd ‘getting in touch with nature’—is not just some cosmic experience but has a direct effect on your time in the outdoors. Keen observation, for example, is the foundation of good navigation and route finding. It also helps when anticipating the weather, selecting campsites, locating water, planning rest stops—and in a myriad of other ways.

As well as these practical considerations there is something strangely reassuring about being *engaged* by the natural order of things. To meander beneath a canopy of forest giants or to follow a serpentine gorge deep into the heart of an ancient range can be stirring experiences. To feel at ease and have a sense of belonging in such domains makes them even more compelling. To be in these places that are often so immense and seemingly beyond human control fulfils a primal need that nothing fabricated can satisfy.

Such encounters are accessible to anyone. That is the great virtue of bushwalking. Yet a kind of mystique often surrounds those who rove with a rucksack. Certainly it takes time to

develop a little bush acumen but you need not learn a secret handshake or digest a book of rules. And the necessary physical skills could hardly be more elementary. This is one pastime which doesn't necessitate signing up for humiliating lessons run by designer-clad instructors, nor is there any requirement to adopt training regimes or off-beat diets. Walking can be as

relaxed or gung-ho as you want to make it.

Gear

There is of course more to travelling in the wilds than sauntering about peering at the countryside. But not a lot more. Bushwalking is the ultimate minimalist pastime. Some sturdy boots; a day pack with a few sandwiches and a bottle of water; a hat and some sunscreen—and you're on your way. Later on, when embarking on overnight walks to more distant places you'll want somewhere to sleep (a sleeping-bag and a tent; or why not an overhang in a cliff-face?), something to keep you warm and dry (a jumper, a rain-jacket and a second change of clothes) and some food and something with which to cook it. Other than a basic first aid kit and some idea where you are going (this *may* be helped by a map and compass), that is all you really need. The trick is to match what you take with the type of experience you want to have. There seems to be no shortage of those who to want to get away from it all by taking it all with them. Leave such people to their clutter and leave all but the basics behind.

WHERE AND HOW

There's a tremendous diversity of places where you can practise being footloose. Significant tracts of bushland are not far away from even our largest cities. Most National Parks and many reserves feature marked tracks and campsites designed for walkers. Aside from the better-known destinations there are assorted State Forests, Crown lands and coastal margins where you can stride out in style. And there is rarely any charge to *walk* in these places though you may be hit with a fee for camping out or parking your car. To get you started, some of these places are listed in the box on page 36.

A day or a week?

Bushwalking encompasses everything from an hour's stroll to a wilderness pilgrimage that lasts several weeks. You don't have to grit your teeth for long days of deprivation and dehydrated food if you don't want to—it's completely up to you. Naturally the most pristine wilderness is generally far from the tendrils of civilisation but many spectacular destinations can be reached within a few days. Except on walks where your itinerary is dictated by a scarcity of water or suitable campsites, you can make your days as long or as short as you wish. If your idea of a day in the bush is a late start, a long breakfast, a short stroll and no hills, there's bound to be a walk that will oblige. Once you have the skills and the confidence there are few places

State bushwalking organisations

Queensland

Queensland Federation of Bushwalking Clubs, GPO Box 1573, Brisbane, Qld 4001.

New South Wales

New South Wales Federation of Bushwalking Clubs, GPO Box 2090, Sydney, NSW 2001.

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Bushwalking Club Inc, PO Box 160, Canberra, ACT 2601.

Victoria

Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs, GPO Box 815F, Melbourne, Tas 3001.

Tasmania

Federation of Tasmanian Bushwalking Clubs, PO Box 1090, Launceston, Tas 7250.

South Australia

Adelaide Bushwalkers Inc, PO Box 178, Unley, SA 5061.

Western Australia

Perth Bushwalkers, 2 Pearl Pde, Scarborough, WA 6091.

Northern Territory

Darwin Bushwalking Club, GPO Box 1938, Darwin, NT 0801.

that you can't reach with a carefully packed rucksack and a long enough break from 'real life'.

Can I do it?

Given the breadth of its appeal walking also cuts across demographic boundaries. It attracts a quirky array of devotees from family groups and professional couples to restless loners and modern-day gypsies. Nor is the appeal of walking confined to any particular age group. These days I'm growing used to being overtaken by the flying heels of seven-year-olds. Equally, I know people in their 70s doing walks I wish I were fit and energetic enough to manage.

There is no special 'trick' to bushwalking. The constraints are obvious. If

you are unfit or inexperienced you shouldn't tackle a long, difficult walk. A blizzard in Tasmania's highlands is no time to discover that you don't know how to pitch your tent. But it's surprising what you can do with a bit of confidence and the willingness to learn a few skills. It may be a cliché, but every seasoned outdoors adventurer was once a beginner with nothing but the desire to go bush.

The rewards

Many motivations animate a walker's feet. There are those who enjoy moving swiftly along recognised tracks. For the fleet of foot the reward is being able to reach deep into the back country and take in rarely glimpsed vistas. Others keep on returning to favourite tracks.

Such walks can take on the character of a ritual. Each encounter deepens one's appreciation of familiar terrain. There is the chance to witness the subtle changes from season to season. Over the years the features of the landscape become bound up with memories of earlier walks on to which new experiences can be grafted.

By contrast there is the exhilaration of beholding new territory. Australia is richly endowed with country that is rarely travelled. From the wilds of western Tasmania to the continent's arid interior and the undisturbed frontiers in the tropical north the possibilities for those with a bent for exploration are inexhaustible. Even in the larger parks on the outskirts of

Your State's best bushwalking

Queensland

Many of the best areas within striking distance of Brisbane are near the Queensland-New South Wales border. These include the tracks among the granite outcrops of Girraween National Park. Further east lies the well-known Lamington National Park with its forests and densely vegetated ravines. Mt Barney, nearby, boasts some spectacular walking to rocky peaks up to a height of 1300 metres.

By contrast, the tracks available among the dunes, lakes and beaches of Moreton Island, Cooloola National Park and the famed Fraser Island provides a very different experience. Most tracks are well marked and easy to follow. Further north, and inland, rises the plateau and gorge country, which includes Carnarvon Gorge National Park and Blackdown Tableland National Park, both of which have about 20 kilometres of maintained tracks together with abundant opportunities for more adventurous back-country walking.

New South Wales

Few major cities in the world have the same kind of wild country on their doorstep as Sydney. The scope for day, overnight and wilderness walks in the Blue Mountains and adjacent wilderness areas is virtually inexhaustible. Even closer to the metropolis is Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park to the north, with its sandstone ridges giving glimpses of Broken Bay and beyond. To the south sprawls the surprisingly large Royal National Park with its extensive heathlands and stunning coastline which can be traversed by the classic Bundeena to Otford walk.

The options are no less varied further afield. A cluster of parks extending from the New England Tableland to the Queensland border boast high escarpments and luxuriantly vegetated river systems. Out west in the eroded volcanic landscapes of Mt Kapatut National Park and the Warrumbungles National Park there is excellent walking among spectacular peaks. The extensive alpine terrain of Kosciusko National Park in the south of the State features many tracks to explore and gentle summits to climb in the summer months. Closer to the coast, areas such as Moreton National Park and the Budawang are accessible to walkers all year round.

Victoria

A series of small parks including those around the Dandenong Ranges, Kinglake and the Brisbane Ranges offer opportunities for introductory walks not far from Melbourne's outskirts. More challenging options are to be had in coastal parks like Wilsons Promontory and the Otway Ranges.

Victoria's alpine country contains some of the State's most challenging walking—for example, on the peaks around Mt Howitt—and some of the most accessible such as the shorter tracks on the gently undulating Bogong High Plains. At the opposite end of the State, the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park has a tremendous variety of options from short day-walks to extended excursions around the Major Mitchell Plateau and in the rugged and relatively unvisited Victoria Range.

Tasmania

The island State has become a bushwalkers' Mecca for good reason. Although best known for its superlative wilderness walking in the South-west and the Central Highlands, there are many shorter walks suited to those starting out. (Some of these are described in Track Notes in this issue, beginning on page 71.) As well as Mt Wellington on the city's outskirts, popular destinations around Hobart include the Hartz Mountains, Tasman Peninsula and Mt Field. In the north of the State the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park is easily the best-known walking area although Ben Lomond National Park to the north-east offers scope for summer walking in a dramatic setting of dolerite cliffs.

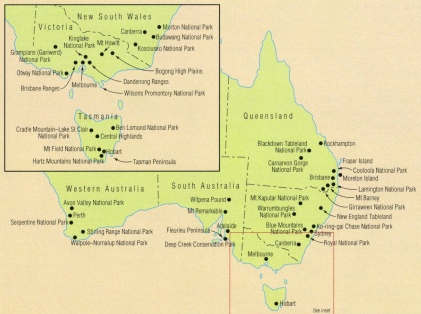
South Australia

Many Adelaide walkers take their first steps in the bush on sections of the Heysen Trail which extends all the way from the Flinders Ranges to the tip of the Fleurieu Peninsula in the south. A series of small parks—such as Black Hill and Morialta—in the Adelaide Hills are ideal for day walks while the rugged, coastal terrain of Deep Creek Conservation Park lends itself to overnight trips. Inevitably, however, walkers are lured north to the Flinders Ranges and areas like Mt Remarkable and Wilpena Pound.

Western Australia

The Stirling Range National Park, a cluster of peaks rising abruptly out of the wheat fields 400 kilometres south-east of Perth, is one of this State's best-known walking areas. Even more varied are the possibilities in nearby coastal parks such as Walpole-Nornalup National Park. Rugged granite, limestone and basalt cliffs flank these shores with enclosed bays, dune-scapes and broad beaches.

Closer to Perth, smaller areas such as the Ayon Valley National Park and Serpentine National Park are popular for day walking, offering varied terrain including eucalypt forests and granite-studded creeks. ■



major cities isolated areas remain where it's feasible to rekindle the spark of discovery. For some the allure of these places is the challenge to progress in complex terrain where the way forward is blocked by rocky obstacles or baffling thickets of vegetation. At times it feels as though you are caught up in a kind of topographical chess game where each move tests your mettle.

It's common enough for treks in the Himalayas to last three weeks or more. These extended stints in unfamiliar settings can be a test of your resolve and that of your companions. Unlike brief overnight outings, such sojourns assume a vitality and rhythm of their own. It can come as quite a jolt to return to 'normal' routine after a month of the slow, meditative, nomadic life. Friendships that survive the rigours of a trek

with the opportunity to glean camping and navigation skills from experienced leaders. Clubs played a leading role in the development of bushwalking in Australia during the early decades of this century. Venerable institutions like the Sydney Bushwalkers have an illustrious tradition of fostering bushwalking in all its facets, from expeditions into unknown terrain to social walks in well-trodden areas.

Courses and training

But what if—like Groucho Marx—you wouldn't want to belong to any club that would have you as a member? While formal bushwalking instruction is rare in other than outdoor education courses, it's possible to pick up a basic understanding of the skills required by joining a guided walk run by an adventure travel company, (genuine) 'ecotourism' operator or the like. Perhaps the quickest way to get the hang of map and compass navigation is to take part in orienteering or rogaining (both are kinds of competition navigating). Ultimately the art of successful walking and camping is finding what works for you by trial and error. The only stipulation is to minimise your impact on the natural habitats into which you venture by adhering to 'minimal-impact' practices. The essence of these is expressed by the phrase 'take only photographs, leave only footprints' although there are some sensitive areas in which you should minimise even the impact of your feet. (See Geoff Law's explanation of these principles on page 48.)

Books

Experience and adversity remain the best teachers but there are a few books that give some hard-won advice on bushwalking and other outdoor topics. These include the classic *Paddy Pallin's Bushwalking and Camping* and Tim Macartney-Snape's recent offering, *Being Outside*. Nor does my innate modesty compel me to ignore *The Outdoor Companion* by Quentin and Jonathan Chester.

For guides and information on walks in your local area contact your nearest equipment outlet, good bookshop, or National Parks office. For a general overview try John Chapman's *Bushwalking in Australia* or *Classic Wild Walks of Australia* by Robert Rankin. *Wild Australia* by Readers Digest is a good reference to parks around the country. Finally, for some historical background have a look at Myles Dunphy: *Selected Writings* and Paddy Pallin's memoirs, *Never Truly Lost*. ■

Quentin Chester (see Contributors in Wild no 3) writes regularly about going bush. He is the co-author of *The Outdoor Companion*, *The Kimberley—Horizons of Stone* and, most recently, *Australia's Wild Islands*, which explores the diversity of 28 of Australia's islands from the tropics to the sub-Antarctic.



Bushwalking is an ideal way to experience the wonders of nature. (Near Mt Jagungal, New South Wales.) Baxter

FAR HORIZONS

Though Australia has enough wild landscapes to keep even the most avid walker engrossed for several lifetimes there is also tremendous scope beyond our shores to expand your horizon. In both Europe and North America walking for pleasure has been practised for centuries. As a result there are well-established networks of walking tracks and footpaths, complete with palatial huts, mountain villages and a rich history of wayfaring.

Coming from a continent with modest peaks, it is perhaps not surprising that so many Australians have shown an eagerness to see the high points of the Himalayas and other mountain regions around the world. Aside from the spectacle of alpine scenery, trekking is an opportunity to make contact with cultures for whom for centuries to travel on foot has been the only way to go. After visiting central Australia to research *The Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin trekked to the Khumbu region in Nepal. There he found the tracks marked with cairns and prayer-flags, 'reminding you that Man's real home is not a house, but the Road, and that life is a journey to be walked on foot'.

or bushwalk tend to endure. For many travellers, the openness, trust and humour generated in the course of a bushwalk are reason enough to keep returning.

YOUR VERY FIRST STEPS

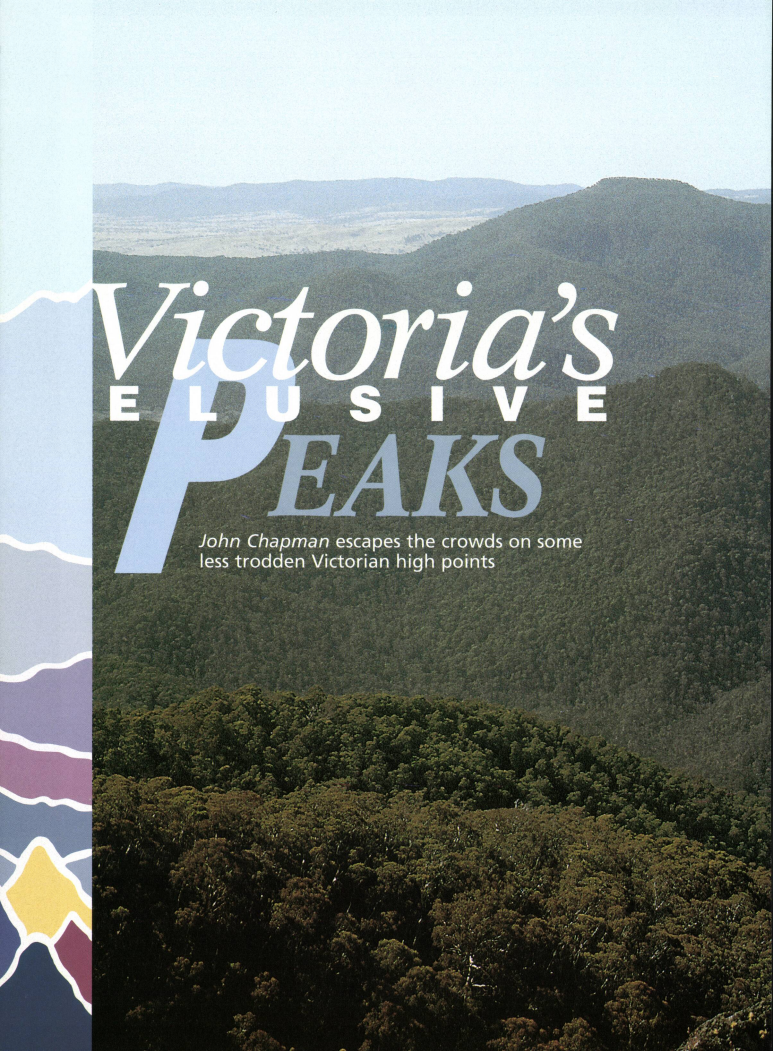
Friends

While there may be no 'correct' path to becoming a bushwalker there's no doubt that you can learn a lot by following in the footsteps of somebody experienced at making his or her way in the wild. Ideally one's initiation to the bush happens in the company of friends or acquaintances who know their stuff. Short day-walks are the best way to start—and to protect the friendship. As you gain in confidence, build up to longer forays into more difficult terrain.

Clubs

If your personal network is under-supplied with outdoor types, consider approaching one of the many clubs and other organisations with bushwalking in their charter. In most States a federation of bushwalking clubs can suggest a suitable local group. (See the list on page 35.) Keep in mind that a lot of conservation groups, university clubs, field naturalist societies and other special-interest groups include organised walks in their programmes.

A club will usually give you a safe, inexpensive introduction to the bush,



Victoria's E L U S I V E P E A K S

*John Chapman escapes the crowds on some
less trodden Victorian high points*

WILD BUSHWALKING



Victoria is one of the great bushwalking States and has been so thoroughly explored that no peaks can be regarded as truly elusive. In this article instead of trying to pin down genuinely elusive peaks I have described some interesting, worthwhile mountains often overlooked when people plan walking trips. These are not always the highest mountains in the State but they all provide some fine views and will give you a different perspective of a region you may otherwise know well. Some of these are close to other, higher, mountains; some are the highest in their area but are still overlooked as a walking destination.

The main cause for there being almost no mountains in Victoria remote from a track and thus difficult to approach can be attributed to the infamous 1939 bushfires which swept across huge sections of the Alps. At the time the Forestry Commission decided that such a disaster should not be repeated and progressively created a network of fire and timber access tracks across the Alps. The commission did this so diligently that today there are over 10 000 kilometres of such tracks. Walkers often comment that the furthest you can get away from a track in Victoria is a mere five kilometres. In addition many of these fire tracks either cross or pass just below each mountain's summit making access quite easy. Walkers in some of the other States don't realise just how lucky they are still to have large sections of country without vehicle tracks.

So while these mountains are not difficult to climb they are a less crowded alternative to such over-popular destinations as the Bluff or Mt Feathertop. Track notes have not been provided; rather, general guidelines to the major approach routes have been given.

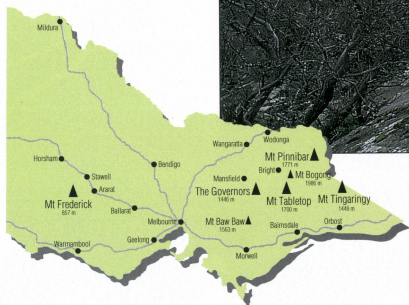


MT FREDERICK

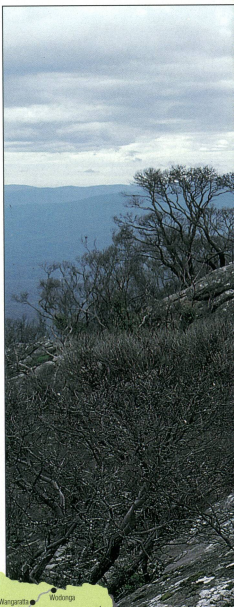
In western Victoria is a series of rugged ranges that are aligned roughly north-south. Collectively these are known as the Grampians. They were once the home of several Aboriginal tribes, who must have climbed all the peaks during their long occupation. The first European explorer to see the ranges was Major Mitchell, who also climbed the highest peak in the Grampians, Mt William. While Mitchell was primarily interested in discovering farming land he was impressed with the grandeur of these ranges. They have since become an important recreation area for those from western Victoria and elsewhere and attract large numbers of visitors every year.

With the extensive road system that criss-crosses the ranges and the huge numbers of visitors—and tracks built for them to use—it's hard to believe that some of the peaks are visited by very few people. The northern half of the range has tracks to most of the major peaks but there are many worthwhile summits in the southern half without tracks. Redmans Bluff, the Dials, Middleton Peak (and in fact most of the Serra Range) and the tumbled jumble of the Victoria Range all offer some fine bushwalking. The major deterrent to off-track walking is the tenacious, prickly scrub. It can be very deceptive as while it is often not very thick and thus transparent, passing through it can be a slow, scratchy effort.

The Serra Range is named from the Portuguese word for mountain, an appropriate title for this saw-toothed ridge. There are wonderful views of the range from the Halls Gap-Dunkeld road. Although it is worth while to climb any of the high points along the cliff-lined ridge, I have chosen one of the smaller peaks, Mt Frederick, to which access is fairly easy at present and from where the views are different and quite sensational.



Normally this peak is guarded by thick, prickly undergrowth but a recent fire has removed most of the bushes so that access is quite easy even if you do end up streaked with charcoal. The nearest track is a closed maintenance road used by park staff. Several short tracks from the main road give walkers access to the Ingletown Track. One way to the peak is to leave this road at the highest point under the main cliff, then ascend one of the gullies at either end of the cliff. You can also approach the peak from the west from Henham Track by a much longer climb which is not so



steep. Another possible approach is to follow the spine of the Serra Range but this requires some tough, scrubby walking and is only suggested for those who are looking for a real challenge.

The summit consists of a massive cliff on the East Face and a steep, rocky slab falling away to the west. As very few trees grow on the rock there are wonderful, uninterrupted views all round. To the north the jagged crest of the Serra Range is impressive while to the south-west there is an unusual view of a hidden valley full of cliffs near Mt Lang. Be



Mt Frederick is a rugged Grampians summit. The Serra Range continues to the north, past Lake Bellfield. *John Chapman. Pages 38 and 39*, the spectacular view from the Governors, over Lickhole Creek and the Howqua River to Mt Timbertop and beyond to the Mansfield plains. *Chris Baxter*

very careful near the cliff-edge if there are strong winds.

While this peak is not remote—it can be climbed from a road in less than two hours—it is a rarely visited place that is well worth the effort of climbing.

THE GOVERNORS

The Howqua Valley near Mansfield has long been a favourite place for local bushwalkers and almost every peak has a well-defined track to its summit. Mt Howitt, Mt Magdala, Mt Speculation, the Bluff and Eagles Peaks often have many walkers treading over them. While at first it seems as though all the worthwhile peaks have well-trodden routes there is a dominant one that is not

difficult to reach yet has no tracks at all. Often thought to be insignificant in height, the Governors at 1446 metres is in fact higher than its popular neighbour, Eagles Peaks.

The Governors is the last major peak on the western end of the range and it is surprising that there is no well-defined track to its summit. A well-worn track, the much-used Lickhole Gap track that was originally used by pack-horses, crosses its flanks. Perhaps this peak has not received a great deal of attention because it is inside a State Forest and not a National Park. The name seems to have been given because it is the lowest peak in the range yet holds a commanding position on the western end of the range, dominating the undulating Mansfield plains.

The Governors is actually a rocky ridge with several minor summits along its length and is predominantly covered in forest and scrub. This limits views but with some searching, the tops of the cliffs which outcrop near the summits provide some fine vantage points. The

forest cover affords some protection in the numerous saddles if you decide to camp near the top and watch the sun setting over the western plains. The only drawback is that water must be carried up from the valleys as there are no water-supplies on the ridge itself.

The northern and eastern ridges provide reasonable access to the summit with only light scrub. The easiest way to reach this summit is to leave the walking track near Lickhole Gap and follow the scrubby ridge south-west to the top. An alternative approach which has only a very mild scrub cover is by the north-western ridges. In contrast, despite an old vehicle track running part of the way, the southern approaches from Mitchells homestead are reputed to have thick scrub and to be very slow.

MT TABLETOP

The Bogong High Plains and their surrounding satellite peaks are the highest region of Victoria. Among the best of

the peaks is Mt Hotham and it's a pity that this summit is marred by a ski resort and a major road as otherwise it would provide some sensational walking. This great mountain has little appeal for walkers in its present state. However, some of the nearby peaks are well worth a visit.

The best-known satellite peak is Mt Feathertop, which more often than not has far too many walkers on it to qualify as 'elusive'. If you want a more peaceful time, with a mountain to yourself, head south from Mt Hotham towards the aptly named Mt Tabletop instead. It is clearly visible from the summit of Mt Hotham and from numerous vantage points along the gravel-covered main road as you drive from Mt Hotham towards the resort at Dinner Plain.

The start of the track at JB Plain is poorly marked but once located is easy to follow to the mountain. Though it is designated as a walking track horse-riders use it regularly and the damage they have caused around the creek crossings is all too evident. Even so this track makes a pleasant return day walk and from the clifftops there are fine views over the deep valleys of the Dargo River and its tributaries.

A more interesting approach is from the south starting from the extensive river flat of the old gold town of Mayford. The ridges up this side are covered in tall forest with little undergrowth and provide some steep but fairly easy off-track walking to the summit plateau. There are several routes to the Mayford flat and



Mt McDonald from near the summit of the Governors. **Baxter, Middle,** Mt Tabletop viewed from Precipice Plain. **Right,** bureaucratic overkill? (Locked gate on Mt William, across the valley from Mt Frederick.) Chapman

The mountain stands apart from the main ridge of Mt Hotham and consists of an almost level plateau which is surrounded on most sides by cliffs. The plateau is covered with trees but there are fine views on all sides from the clifftops. The summit cairn itself is on a minor rise on the northern end of the plateau and is hidden in the trees.

The easiest approach is by a marked walking track from JB Plain which is named after Jim Brown, the farmer who is credited with recognising the farming potential of the alpine pastures of the Bogong High Plains. He certainly didn't 'discover' the High Country as some writers imply. The Aborigines used to come here in summer to feast on moths and other food.

if using the vehicle tracks for access, walkers should be aware that these are incredibly steep, with the track from Precipice Plain having locked gates across it to prevent vehicle access.

MT PINNIBAR

The north-eastern portion of Victoria contains the State's highest peaks and such popular walking areas as the Bogong High Plains. Most walkers imagine that there is little of interest between the High Plains and Mt Kosciusko and that the area is comparatively low. This is not the case at all. There are some relatively high peaks in this large chunk of country which is rarely visited by bushwalkers. Mt Gibbo is one significant peak but the highest in this forgotten region is Mt Pinnibar which, at 1771 metres, is just below the high points of the Bogong High

Plains. Its name comes from the Aboriginal word 'pinnir', which means 'come on'. In winter it is generally covered by snow as are its high neighbours.

Few people have ever been attracted to walking in this area. Just as a high peak may cast a rain-shadow over its neighbours, so a popular or

spectacular bushwalking destination may cause nearby, worthwhile attractions to be overlooked. It is true that to get to this area from major population centres such as Melbourne entails a lengthy drive but that has not stopped walkers from going to Mt Kosciusko or the Coberras for extended weekends and these are both further away than Mt Pinnibar.

For a while this peak did attract a few walkers as it formed part of the original route of the Alpine Walking Track. Indeed, the ascent of Mt Pinnibar was a highlight of this section of the walk. However, it has returned to its former obscurity with the diversion of the track further south so that it passes the Coberras on its way into Kosciusko National Park.

As is the case with many of the major peaks of Victoria the forestry industry carved fire and timber access roads directly over the summit years



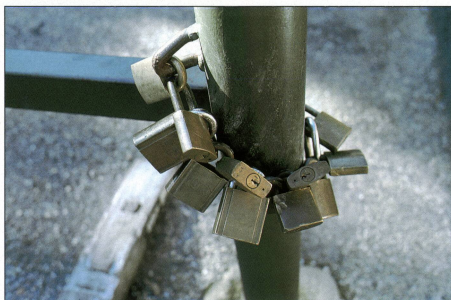
ago. I have never understood how taking a vehicle track over the top of a mountain facilitated access to more timber or helped to fight fires, but it was done in the days when we 'conquered' the mountains rather than accept them as they were.

Still, these tracks provide easy access to the summit with four-wheel-drive tracks leading up all the major ridges. While the routes to the top consist of track bashes the views over the Alps are indeed impressive. Mt Kosciusko and its plateau dominate the eastern view; to the south is Mt Gibbo while to the west the plateaux of the Bogong High Plains and Mt Buffalo sprawl across the horizon. On the descent on the eastern side the inviting river flats of the privately owned Tom Groggin station are visible.

A visit here is hardly a wilderness experience but you are not likely to meet too many other people and the views across the Alps are unique and worth a visit.

MT TINGARINGY

The really forgotten corner of Victoria has to be East Gippsland. This area contains some wonderful country and while a couple of places such as the Coberras and Little River Gorge are well known, most of the region sees very few walking parties. Here are the largest



tracts of natural forest in the State but these are steadily decreasing as a result of the pressures of logging and wood-chipping. The few existing National Parks are fragmented and are usually the forests and land that were deemed too poor to log.

The major parks are now combined into and form part of the Alpine National Park. This is not the continuous National Park the title implies but is instead a series of pocket parks that have been linked together by narrow corridors. When you consider that the

practice of once-only logging still continues in this area you wonder about the definition of a National Park, which is supposed to protect land and retain it in its natural condition.

Although the Alpine National Park does not always contain the best forests it is still worth exploring. One of the park's significant blocks used to be called the Coberras-Tingaringy National Park. This is actually a rather narrow park; its combination with the Byadbo block of Kosciusko National Park on the other side of the New South Wales border makes it an important area. The main mountain here is Mt Tingaringy which is a granite massif forming a peak worthy of bagging. The Aborigines called it 'Tingara', meaning 'the sea', and perhaps it was so named because the sea is visible from its summit.

Even though this is part of Gippsland, much of it a region of good rainfall, Mt Tingaringy stands within a rain-shadow and receives relatively little rainfall. For bushwalkers this means that the forests are often very open but that water can be frustratingly hard to find in summer and autumn.

The main approach to this mountain is from the Deddick River Road, which runs from the Suggan Buggan area east towards Delegate. The Tingaringy Track provides good access to the summit from either the south-west or the south-east. It

is possible to follow the tracks north into the Byadbo region and do some extended walking here. From the summit clifftops there are views in most directions except to the north-east. If you are prepared to carry the necessary water this is a marvellous place for sunsets and sunrises—it is the highest peak in this area. ■

John Chapman (see Contributors in Wild no 1) is one of Australia's most travelled and widely respected bushwalking writers. He is particularly well known for his books of Tasmanian track notes.



WALKING THE FINE LINE

Tasmania's blueprint for walking-track management,
by Tracey Diggins

I have travelled to some of the extremes the planet has to offer—from the seething, pulsing streets of India to the stark, white expanses of Antarctica. But I keep coming 'home' to Tasmania—to the wilderness. Tasmania's wilderness has been a prized destination for generations of bushwalkers as well as the focus of some of Australia's most hard-fought conservation campaigns. Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1982 and expanded in 1989, the area is now recognised as a wilderness of outstanding world value.

When I first visited the Tasmanian wilderness in 1981 very little of it was protected—some of its best-known features were totally unprotected—and the Franklin River was threatened with inundation by the Gordon-below-Franklin hydroelectric scheme.

That first trip was particularly memorable. I spent 16 days rafting the Franklin River with three friends. Over the next 12 years I was to return at every opportunity, walking most of the well-known routes as well as exploring some of the more remote, trackless country. After my mother's death in 1994 it was the South-west wilderness to which I returned again. Sitting on the shores of Lake Rhona helped to ease my profound sense of loss and it was there that I was able to say goodbye.

My most recent trip to the World Heritage Area (WHA) was in a helicopter on a research flight for my new job. When you're on the ground negotiating a particularly scrubby ridge it's easy to imagine that you are in the middle of a wilderness that stretches for ever. Although it encompasses over 1.38 million hectares of wild and natural country in central, west and South-west Tasmania, you really only get a feel for how small it is—a mere remnant of wilderness—from the air. You can fly across most parts of the WHA in less than 20 minutes. And

it's by flying over it that you get the first inkling that this magnificent area which has faced so many threats is now also menaced by spidery networks of bushwalking tracks which show up as white scars as they catch the sun. Many of the most popular campsites are visible as stark patches of bare earth.

When I first joined the Parks & Wildlife Service I had worked for ten years for the Wilderness Society battling logging and mining companies seemingly hell-bent on devouring what remains of our precious wilderness environments. The thought of walkers ruining the wilderness seemed ridiculous. But, ironically, the very beauty of wilderness poses one of its greatest threats. Wilderness is the world's fastest disappearing non-renewable resource. Increasingly, it is a rare commodity and more and more people want to visit what's left. This problem is emerging in wild areas across Australia and around the world. In Tasmania it is exacerbated by the fragility of the landscape. The vegetation, soil, subsoil—and even sometimes the bedrock—are extremely fragile. The steepness of many walking tracks coupled with poor drainage accentuate the problem still further. In some of the alpine areas one ill-placed walking boot can do more damage than a hundred storms; once the bolster of a cushion plant is broken, for example, it becomes highly susceptible to frost and water damage and may take as long as 50 years to recover—if it recovers at all. Soils in many areas accumulate slowly; at the rate of a centimetre every 100 years. Once a track begins to form, particularly on steep terrain, the high rainfall and subsequent run-off wash away the soil and this makes revegetation extremely slow and sometimes impossible.

During the past two decades an increase in the number of walkers in the WHA has led to a rapid deterioration in the condition of walking tracks in much of the region and to other usage-related problems such as crowding and

Bushwalking icon, Cradle Mountain, from the air. The Overland Track is all too visible. *Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service*



Martin Hawes reflects on the majesty of the Western Arthurs. No track is actually visible in this photo, but... **Right**, ...Hawes in an Eastern Arthurs track (on Luckmans Lead). Grant Dixon

unplanned, and damaging, track formation. About 20 000 people are spending 35 000 nights in wild areas every year and in many places this trend is clearly unsustainable. Of the 1000 kilometres of tracks throughout the WHA, 200 kilometres are already heavily eroded to a depth of 25 centimetres or more. Some sections of track on peat soils are eroded to a depth of more than one-and-a-half metres. But that's not all. One hundred kilometres of the tracks are muddy and 85 kilometres are braided. Managers face the difficult challenge of protecting the wilderness values and ecological integrity of the area while maintaining the range of recreational opportunities.

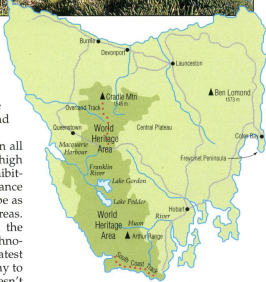
Traditionally, the problem of track deterioration has been tackled through intensive track stabilisation works. Most walkers are probably familiar with techniques such as duck-boarding, cording, double-planking and gravelling. For the most part, this work has focused on such high-use tracks as the Overland Track and the South Coast Track. However, to stabilise tracks intensively does not solve all the problems and can lead to new ones. It is also incompatible with the wilderness values of remote regions and often changes the nature of the

recreational opportunities on a particular track. As a result, users seeking more challenging recreational experiences away from the duck-boards tend to be displaced to other areas—and the process of track development and deterioration begins anew.

Even if it were desirable to harden all the existing tracks in the WHA to a high degree the expense would be prohibitive. The cost of this type of maintenance starts at about \$40 a metre and can be as high as \$100 a metre in remote areas. And if the money were available, the terrain in some places defies a technological solution! But perhaps the greatest limitation of track hardening as a way to resolve the problem is that it doesn't deal with, for example, unplanned track formation, the deterioration and proliferation of campsites, or broad-scale trampling damage. Over 500 kilometres of unplanned tracks could develop within the next 20 years. That's an increase to the existing track network of 50 per cent.

In many regions the enjoyment of walkers is also being affected by the social consequences of overcrowding. In a recent PWS survey, one-third of all walkers reported that encounters with other walkers at campsites had detracted from the enjoyment of their trip.

In response to these problems the PWS has developed a comprehensive walking-



track management strategy which draws together the whole gamut of management options for the area. Its recommendations are based on an exhaustive inventory of tracks and track conditions throughout the WHA and in a number of adjacent natural areas. The PWS Track Monitoring Officer, Martin Hawes, spent 175 days in the field over a period of two years recording conditions along the 1000 kilometres of tracks in this unique region.

I first met Martin through his photography when a friend bought me a copy of his book *Above Me Only Sky* in 1981. Today I look at those photographs with a

more critical eye and with the sad knowledge that many of the wilderness scenes captured so beautifully then are now showing serious signs of wear and tear from too many visitors. The monitoring work bears out these observations and quantifies the extent of the problem. The news is not good. In addition to the 20 per cent of tracks already badly eroded, results show that a further 400 kilometres will be subject to substantially increased erosion within 20 years if decisive action is not taken.

Some strategy recommendations concern the track-work programme across the whole area and introduce some new initiatives such as 'priority erosion control' (PEC) and 'fanning out' in trackless areas. In most cases PEC involves deflecting water off sections of eroding track by building water-bars, or raised barriers, or dips constructed at an angle across tracks on slopes. In other cases the installation of stepping-stones or single-width plank-ing on alpine moorland where mud churning is leading to track widening and braiding has also been effective. The installation of 'fan-out' signs in trackless areas is being employed to encourage walkers to spread out over the landscape rather than walk in each other's footsteps. This helps to prevent the development of unplanned pads and tracks.

The strategy further recommends the introduction of an expanded education campaign with a focus on managing publicity and promotion of certain parts of the WHA. Publicity is generated from many sources including government departments, members of the public, route guide authors, walking clubs, tourist organisations, commercial operators, and magazine editors. Such publicity can erode wilderness values by stimulating an increase in the number of visitors to remote and sensitive areas in the WHA. The campaign formulates a set of guide-lines for appropriate publicity and plans ongoing liaison with wilderness users and publishers.

A process is under way to develop a State-wide walking-track strategy in which the Parks & Wildlife Service, Forestry Tasmania, the Department of Tourism, Sport & Recreation and municipal councils will participate. This is to serve the dual purpose of developing and promoting new options for bush-walkers and taking the pressure off some of the most fragile areas in the WHA.

However, education campaigns, strategies designed to 'redirect traffic' and publicity guide-lines will at best only buy us time without providing a solution to the problems of erosion, campsite deterioration and trampling damage at specific sites. And they will have little or no effect on stemming the

MARTIN HAWES

—the man behind the plan,
by Tracey Diggins

Martin Hawes has a tough job! The author of the Walking Track Management Strategy for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (WHA), he had the enviable task of walking all the tracks in the WHA and recording the state of their present condition. These days he works part time for the Parks & Wildlife Service, co-ordinating the track-monitoring programme which entails maintaining over 350 sites throughout the WHA.

He is also a gifted photographer and the author of *Above Me Only Sky*, which chronicles some of his journeys and thoughts on wilderness. He has a special affinity for the bush, often spending three-four weeks on solo treks in the wilds.

'I'm a strong proponent in my own life at least, of solo trips... When you go with somebody you're dragging along a social structure behind you and there is a strong element of reinforcement of normal social values. When you're out there on your own it's just you communing with something vast and non-human and that's potentially a very powerful experience. And when people say "don't you feel sorry that you don't share that with somebody?" I have to admit that I don't feel sorry at all.'

His passion and intensity are infectious and sometimes overwhelming. And he can be very irreverent. His description of wilderness as something subversive had me racing for the dictionary. The dictionary says that to be subversive is to seek to 'overturn, upset, effect destruction or overthrow governments, religion, the monarchy, principles, etc.'

He laughs: 'It's subversive in the sense that it thumbs its nose at human domination. That's the first thing. And that's probably the one thing that's least acceptable to the "powers that be"—they don't control it. Anything that you don't control is a threat to your power.'

Partly out of frustration and partly as a means of addressing what he describes as the 'politics of deceit', Martin has been working on a second book aptly titled *Open Mind—Radical Inquiry in an Age of Crisis*. In it he explores the need for radical change in society and in human consciousness. The contents are only obliquely relevant to wilderness but the underlying theme of radical change was inspired by the shift in perspective wilderness offers.

'I think the essence of a wilderness experience is that it is transcendental. The beauty of the place wrenches you out of yourself. When you go there you suddenly realise that most of the things that preoccupy you in your everyday life aren't important, they pale into insignificance. That is an extraordinary change of perspective.'

Despite the destruction of Tasmania's wilderness witnessed first hand since the flooding of Lake Pedder, Martin remains committed to the cause of wilderness preservation as a symbol of hope for the planet.

'Australia, and Tasmania in particular, have the potential to be "a shining light in a largely dull and uniform world" as Olegas Truchanas said, because Tasmania has this great spiritual "blast furnace" over on the west which we can tap into. Even if you don't go there you can feel it emanating over the mountains on a good day. Tremendously important, tremendously powerful stuff.' ■



MINIMAL-IMPACT BUSHWALKING

—the golden rules, by Geoff Law

I was cold in the hut so I put another hunk of wood on the fire. I knelt down and blew on the coals. Suddenly, the log was gone: someone had reached over, taken it off the fire and put it back on the heap of wood.

"Why did you do that?" I asked.

The offender said that there was already enough wood on the fire and that the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park would be better off without any fires. This struck me as a provocative and sanctimonious attitude that offended my concept of bushwalking as an activity largely free from rules and regulations imposed by others.

"But I like camp fires!"

Sensible camping

• Select robust campsites. Camping in delicate alpine areas is not only hard on the environment, it is also hard on the camper—these sites are often boggy or exposed.

• Use an existing campsite rather than create a new one.

• Take a modern tent and sleeping-mat to eliminate the need to cut poles or pegs from trees or to cut vegetation for insulation from the ground. Do not dig trenches around tents. It is unnecessary and environmentally damaging.

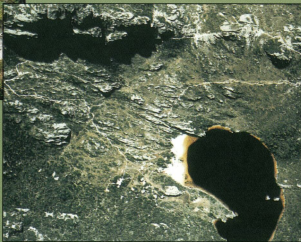
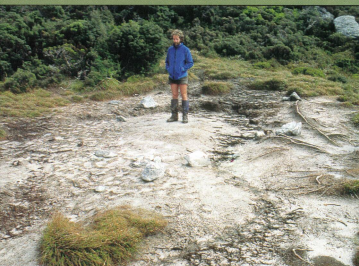
• Wear light shoes rather than heavy boots around the campsite.

Cooking and staying warm at camp

• Large tracts of Tasmania's World Heritage Area are 'fuel-slow only' areas where it is an offence to light camp fires. The maximum penalty is \$5000. Escaped fires lit by careless bushwalkers have incinerated sensitive highland rain forests, including ancient pines that will probably never recover.

• Even a well-managed fire will leave an unsightly black mark. In parts of Tasmania's wilderness the ground consists of peat-moss. It is flammable. Your fire may look extinguished but there could be live coals in underground nooks and crannies! These could flare up later. Lighting fires in peat is illegal.

• Cooking on a stove instead of a fire means that you get your cuppa quickly and without having to endure facefuls of smoke. Cooking and eating in your tent in bad weather beat scavenging for firewood in the rain when you're cold and wet.



Track deterioration is a serious problem throughout Tasmania's World Heritage Area. Dixon, Near right, aerial photo of Lake Cygnus, Western Arthurs, (February 1995) showing an alarming network of unplanned tracks. *NPWS.* Far right, Tracey Diggins on the Freycinet Peninsula. *Michael Fogarty*

He went on to explain that Tasmania's highland wilderness areas are sensitive; that the trees take decades to mature and can grow for as long as 1000 years; and that one bushfire could wipe out the whole lot for ever. What could I say? He was right. It annoyed me; I didn't want to change part of a cherished life-style. But if I cared about the country through which I was walking, perhaps I should...

This was my introduction to minimal-impact bushwalking (MIB). It wasn't even called that in those days. It was only in subsequent years, during the mid-1980s, that Tasmania's National Parks authorities began actively and methodically to promote the concept. It is now an accepted way among experienced bushwalkers of ensuring that our activities don't wreck the very things we want to enjoy.

There's more to MIB than not lighting camp fires. It applies to all phases of your trip.

Planning the walk

- Travel 'off peak'—you'll have more areas to yourself.
- Keep your party small (two-eight people). Large parties do more damage, are often slow and unwieldy and annoy other walkers.
- Pack to minimise rubbish. Leave redundant packaging behind.
- Bring along runners or thongs to minimise damage to the campsite. Carry a stove for cooking and a tool for burying your faeces.
- Learn about the ecology of the area you're about to visit so that you can minimise your impact.

Treading lightly

• Stay on the track. Cutting corners on zigzags causes erosion. In Tasmania, many tracks are muddy. Avoiding the mud by trampling adjacent vegetation creates a braided quagmire which is a visual disaster. Walking in the mud confines the impact.

• Fan out in trackless country. A major problem in Tasmania's wilderness is the proliferation of unplanned walking tracks. If your party spreads out in trackless areas, the impact is dispersed.

• Watch your step. A heelprint in one of Tasmania's cushion plants can take years to disappear. If possible, stay on rocks and hard ground.

• Leave no trace. Cutting new tracks is against the law. Tapes or cairns used to mark new routes are unsightly and can confuse other walkers.

Hygiene

- Where a toilet has been provided, use it.
- Where there are no toilets, bury your faecal waste and toilet-paper in a hole at least 15 centimetres deep. Choose a spot at least 100 metres from campsites and creeks.
- Burning toilet-paper is dangerous. It started the fire that incinerated the rain forest on Tasmania's Mt Olympus in 1976.
- Consider carrying out human wastes from high-use areas or when travelling through deep snow. (Most river-rafting companies on the Franklin River do this.) See *Getting Started in Wild* no 58 for more information on how best to do this.

These precautions not only protect the environment. They also protect you and other bushwalkers from the spread of gastro-intestinal diseases such as giardia. Bushwalking holidays and diarrhoea do not make a happy combination.

• Washing with detergents and even biodegradable soaps can harm aquatic life. Use a scourer or sand instead.

Food and rubbish

• If you've carried it in, you can carry it out—all of it. (Technically, orange peel is biodegradable, but it lies around for ages and looks horrible.)

• The days of 'burn, bash and bury' are long gone.

• Feeding native animals can make them sick or turn them into obnoxious pests.

Spread the word

• Talk to your friends and other bushwalkers about MIB. Word of mouth and peer-group pressure are the most effective ways of encouraging people to improve their behaviour. ■

tide of unplanned track formation. These impacts are a direct result of unsustainable numbers of walkers and are potentially overwhelming and in many cases irreversible. The minimal-impact bushwalking (MIB) campaign will obviously continue to be a vital mechanism. But no matter how carefully or conscientiously walkers comply with a minimal-impact code, some damage will still occur. If it takes 50 pairs of feet scuffing a piece of ground to cause a track to erode and our feet are among those 50 pairs, we are part of the problem. Once sustainable limits are exceeded it is of little consequence whether the walkers are MIB-conscious or not. Using natural areas sustainably entails acceptance of this fact. Given the current trends, numbers in the most sensitive areas, such as the Western Arthurs, must inevitably be regulated.

Therefore a major proposal of the PWS walking-track management strategy is the introduction of a permit system to cover Tasmania's entire Wilderness World Heritage Area in order to enable usage of the wilderness to be managed in an integrated manner. In consultation with user groups—including representatives of both Tasmanian and mainland bushwalkers—investigations are under way at present to determine the most appropriate type of permit system and method of permit issue having regard to the many issues involved.

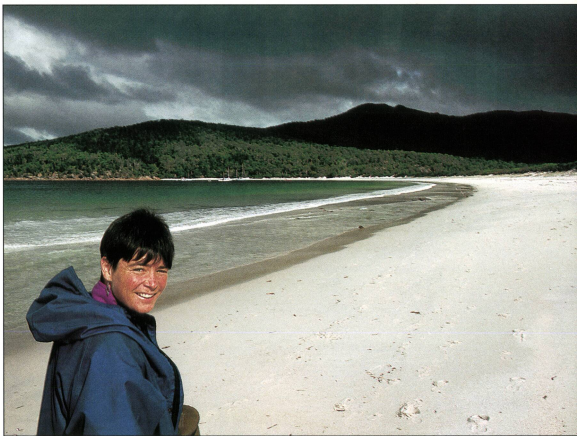
The proposed introduction of a permit system has generated vigorous debate within the walking community. A recent survey found that some 70 per cent of walkers who use the WHA support this step as a means of addressing environmental concerns. In addition, 80 per cent of walkers favour restrictions on party size.

Permit systems have been in place at Wilsons Promontory in Victoria and at Hinchinbrook Island in north Queensland since the 1970s and 1980s, respectively. Both areas were under extreme pressure from an ever increasing number of visitors. Permits in these places were introduced to ensure that wilderness values were protected. Since their introduction some of the most heavily degraded sections of track have begun to recover. By regulating numbers at various campsites the visitor experience has also been enhanced. Similarly, permits and quotas were introduced in New Zealand and the USA many years ago.

While the concept of freedom of choice is inextricably bound up with the wilderness experience, walkers will increasingly find it necessary to limit some freedoms for the sake of preserving our wilderness environments. If we as walkers shirk this responsibility, if we continue to treat freedom of choice as sacrosanct, we risk having more and more places that will be less and less worth travelling to.

of some recreational opportunities and with a limited range of solutions; namely, the expenditure of huge amounts of money and/or the closure of large areas for decades.

The introduction of permits takes a long-term view of the problem. There are certainly 'costs' associated with a permit system. Some people may not be able to obtain a permit for their first choice of destination or time, requiring a



Some people will advocate a delay in the introduction of permits. They will argue that more research, more monitoring and more user education are necessary. But we already have an enormous volume of information about the impact of walkers. A visit to any number of sites in the Tasmanian WHA reveals the extent of the damage that already exists. Experience both here and overseas shows that education, while extremely valuable, has little or no effect on the damage being done at certain heavily used sites. A misplaced trust in education without the employment of other management options such as permits, quotas and restrictions on party size will increase the problem. We already know that ecological impacts occur very rapidly and that impacted sites recover slowly. Unless we acknowledge now that indirect management techniques alone are inadequate, the ecological integrity of Tasmania's wilderness will be further compromised. The consequences of unchecked growth in visitor numbers may be so great that we will be left with the permanent loss

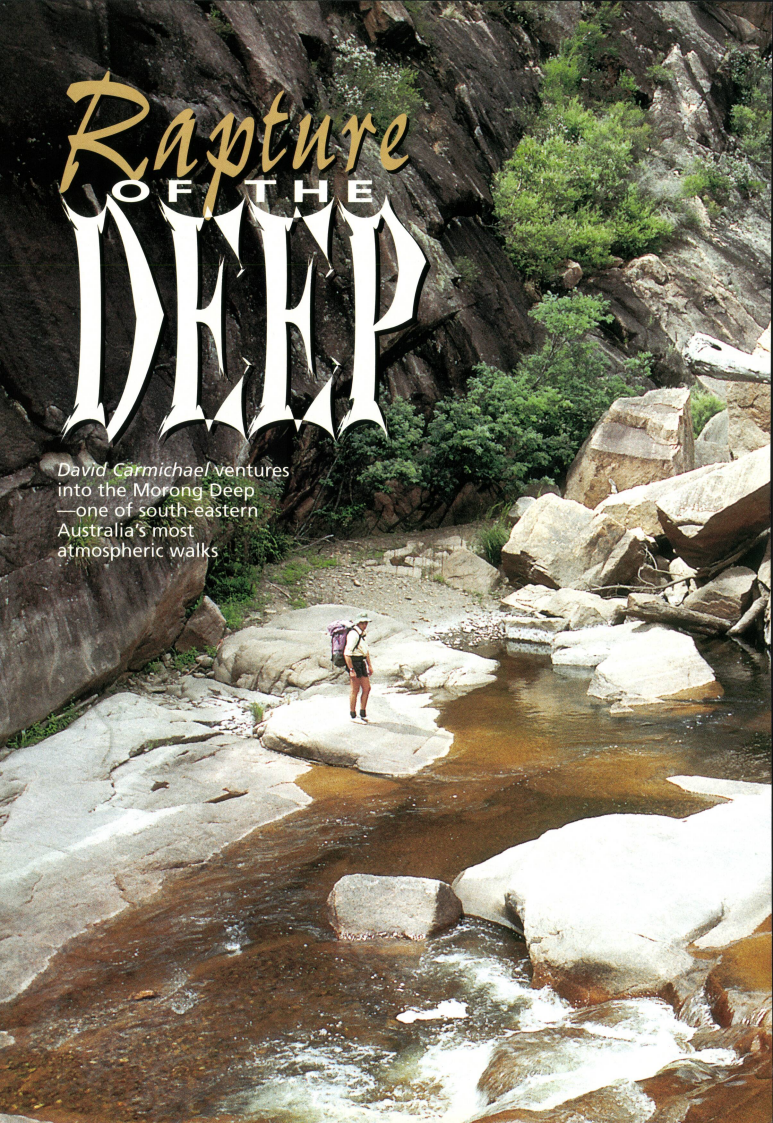
change of plan. In the long term, however, this is a small price to pay to obtain a wilderness experience of a higher quality for all those receiving permits and, indeed, for all users, who will enjoy a less degraded wilderness.

By introducing permits sooner rather than later, we are being active in our management and far-sighted in our approach. To delay will only result in yet more damage to this wild and wonderful environment. I believe that such a delay is a luxury we can't afford. If walkers are serious about their responsibilities towards protecting these areas, they must be prepared to put self-interest aside and think of the environment. Like it or not, access is no longer a right but a privilege. ■

Tracey Diggins is a science graduate and teacher who has worked for the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Society, for whom she researched, wrote and produced three much-lauded education kits, Wilderness: The Original and the Best of Planet Earth; East Gippsland: Wilderness or Wood-chips for Victoria's Green Corner?; and Travelling South: Journeys into Antarctica. She was director of the Wilderness Society's education unit for seven years from 1986 to 1992. She was appointed as Education Officer for Tasmania's PWS in March 1995.

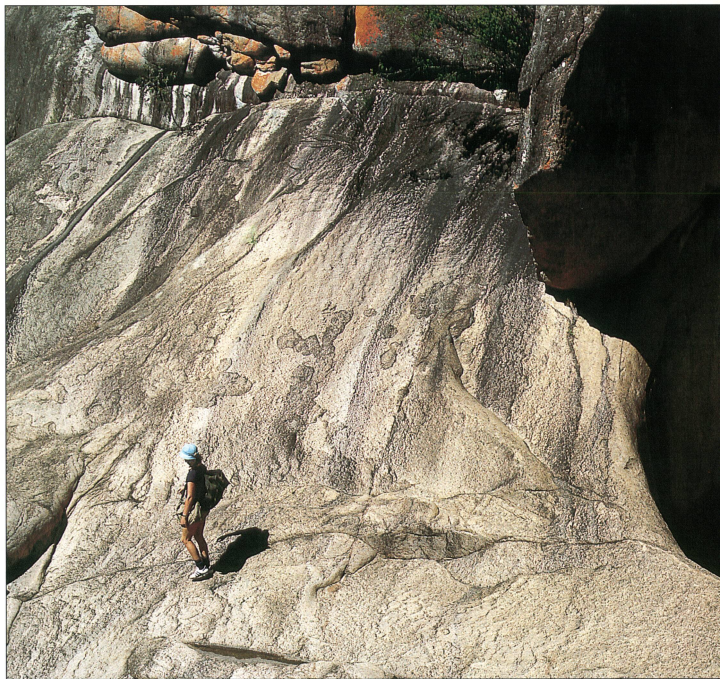
Rapture OF THE DEEP

*David Carmichael ventures
into the Morong Deep
—one of south-eastern
Australia's most
atmospheric walks*



WILD BUSHWALKING





I paused on the steep descent to the river. Underfoot the ground was loose and deceptive. Eucalypt leaves littered the rocky surface, drying in the hot summer sun. Through a break in the foliage—a collection of red-spotted, stringybark and ribbon gums—on the far side of the gorge I observed Morong Creek as it plunged over a magnificent rock face in a graceful fall towards its confluence with the mighty Kowmung River.

The Kowmung! It is alone among the major waterways of the greater Blue Mountains area not to have suffered severe man-made damage along its torrid course. Formed by the joining of two smaller rivulets near the limestone country surrounding Tuglow Caves south of the rugged Boyd Plateau, the Kowmung soon begins a desperate journey through wild gorge country as it

carves a passage in this high terrain to the north and the impressive Murrumbidgee Range along its southern flanks. The river has eroded and pounded a splendid watercourse in the hard, pink deposit underlying the region. Here, the Kowmung swirls round huge cliffs, plunges under house-sized boulders and crashes over waterfalls. On a topographic map the river appears amid a convulsion of contour lines bent continuously between steep ridges and spurs. Into this untamed land with its foreboding name—the Morong Deep—we were about to venture. A shiver of excitement and anticipation shook me as I continued down the ridge.

Our small party arrived at the bottom a short time later. We rested briefly, drinking from the cool, dark water, made final waterproofing adjustments to our packs and glanced around to

consolidate our bearings. The riverbed is littered with small boulders the size of our rucksacks; the Kowmung's waters mingle and meander between them. Their firm placing and close alignment provided a sound foundation to rock-hop our way downstream. Rounding a small bend the tumbling flow of Morong Creek came into view and was quickly left behind. Almost immediately the sides of the gorge steepened, the sloping banks giving way to sheer granite cliffs. This extremely hard rock has been worn, polished and sculpted by the might of the river in spate and the many and varied forms it has produced overwhelmingly impressed us for the next two days. The lack of vegetation below the high-water mark is awesome testimony to the power of the Kowmung in flood. Even in the calmer months with the river a relatively benign trickle, the



Ample evidence of the awesome power of water on the landscape. **Right**, 'One at a time, please.' **Pages 50 and 51**, no place to be in a flood! All photos David Carmichael

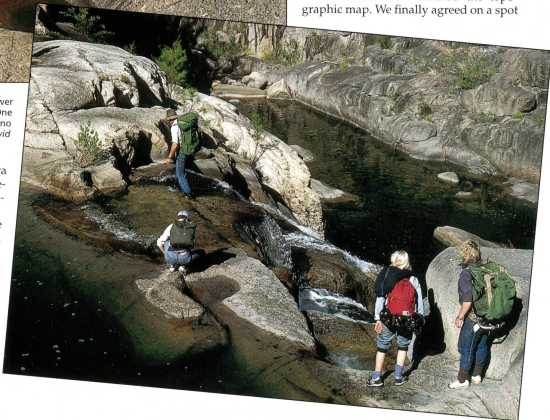
spectacular and powerful aura of this majestic place of awesome beauty was not diminished.

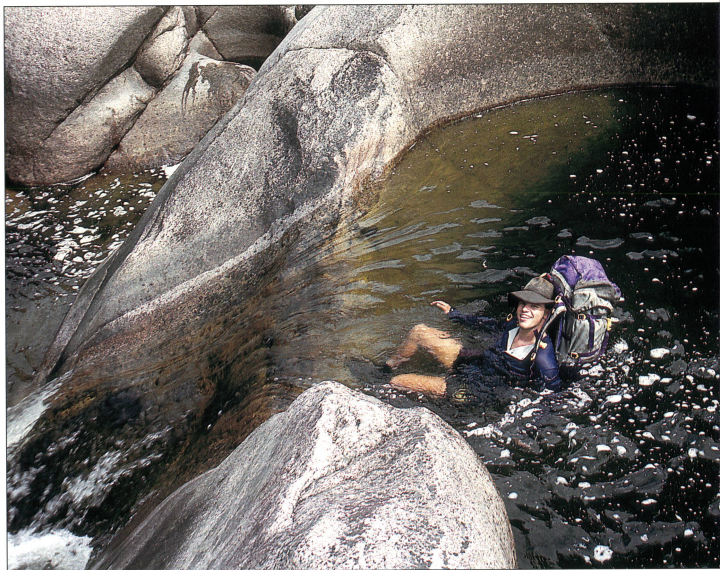
We continued on. Our pace had been reduced to a crawl by boulders grown to gigantic proportions and the route required careful negotiation between the maze of obstacles now in our path. Often a seemingly good option would lead to a dead end, the party stranded on top of large boulders with vertical drop offs on three sides, entailing a time-consuming

retreat. It was these challenges in overcoming the constant difficulties that were among the appealing aspects of the walk—the delicate rockcraft manoeuvre; the controlled bum slide down a steep, inclined face (hoping that the drop off was not too great at the bottom); awkward, long stretches above waiting pools (the weight of your pack attempting to induce a swim); and the delicate test of the grip of your sand-shoes, not to mention your nerve, as you carefully shuffled along a slippery ledge of water-polished rock.

After several hours we came to a sudden halt before a huge pool completely surrounded by cliffs. In vain we explored for options; finally our conclusions were the same: 'Looks like a swim.' I hastily stuffed my camera into a waterproof bag in the top of my pack before easing down a gentle slope into the cool, dark water and beginning to breast-stroke across the pool. I had left my waist-strap secured and found my rucksack, buoyed by its waterproof compartments, pushing awkwardly against the back of my head with each forward movement, making the whole action very ungainly. The swim was cool but pleasant as the sun had finally crossed the bottom of the gorge. Turning round I saw that my companions were pushing their packs ahead of them. A slower but perhaps more comfortable method? Several swims followed in quick succession becoming ever more refreshing as the day went on and the temperature increased.

We found a large, flat rock on which to relax from our exertions and had a satisfying lunch. Some debate on our rate of progress and our actual location ensued when we examined the topographic map. We finally agreed on a spot





'Honest, Mum, I had a bath every day.'

after nearby features seemed to align with the map.

Pressing on, we soon encountered the first waterfall—an eight metre drop into a narrow pool. Although a large boulder provided a natural platform from which to launch bodies and packs, the small landing area at the bottom combined with the opaque water made us pause for thought. We finally agreed that I would go first, the others would lower the packs by our short hand-line and then also jump. Concentrating on not going out too far in flight—as there appeared to be a submerged rock shelf extending down from the opposite bank—I launched myself into space. Arms flailing I hit the water remembering at the last moment to grab my hat off my head. I went deep, my right foot gently touching the submerged obstacle—definitely a good idea to stay close to our bank. I was back on the surface in a moment letting out a loud 'yahoo' for my success. The packs were quickly lowered and they bobbed off down the pool. My companions leaped more directly downward and avoided any

undesirable submerged objects. The only difficulty during the whole exercise occurred when one unfortunate shutterbug who had jumped and then scrambled ashore to take a photograph slipped back into the river, dunking his camera. It was speedily rescued but not surprisingly failed to work for the remainder of the trip, much to the owner's frustration.

Past a minor bend another pool which required a compulsory swim ended in a sloping two metre cascade into a deep hole. Pausing near the brink we decided to ride the flow over the edge. Each walker was quickly caught in the current as it gathered momentum and was swept, pack and all, over the lip and down the slide. A small backwash at the bottom tumbled us momentarily as we fought to right ourselves, with our heavy rucksacks exerting an unsteady influence. We managed to paddle ashore, wide grins showing our joy. With packs left on the bank we headed back to repeat the slippery dip.

Around mid-afternoon the river's rate of descent had noticeably flattened, making our progress faster than expected. We paused briefly for another

swim, jumping from a rock on the river's left bank. After numerous plunges, followed by a makeshift rockclimb out of the pool, we all looked up as one of our party yelled out in excitement. At the far upstream end of the narrow pool a small kangaroo was treading water and slowly making its way across the river. We stared in silence. Having made an unsuccessful attempt to escape from the water only to be beaten by slippery rocks, it drifted by. The current picked up and the captive animal was swirled round some small boulders. As it was about to be washed into a turbulent cascade, in a desperate flurry the roo exited ungracefully on to the bank, where it rested, waterlogged, as we continued past on the opposite side.

A small, flat area just downstream provided a tiny but comfortable campsite—the only spot we'd noticed since entering the gorge. We were tempted. But it was still early in the afternoon and we decided to press on. Most of the larger pools now had easy scrambles round their banks with the sides of the gorge distinctly less sheer.

On the corner of a major bend we spotted another possible campsite. As it



area to our left on a minor ledge above the river looked adequate for a bivouac to weary eyes. Dumping our packs we decided to scout downstream before making a final decision.

Scampering along unburdened of our additional gear we located another small but preferable site just beyond a huge deposit of driftwood. Several small ledges among a series of huge monoliths provided a dispersed but pleasant camp with a fine view. Immediately downstream the Kowmung pounded over an impressive ten metre drop.

We quickly retreated to retrieve our packs. We decided on one area for our cooking-fire and then each ventured off to find a sleeping place. I took a large, flat boulder directly over the water. With the weather looking very promising I decided to sleep out and promptly inflated my air-mat before spreading out my sleeping-bag. However, the news wasn't so good from other quarters, with my two companions having suffered leaks in their waterproofing—nothing too drastic, but a slightly damp sleeping-bag was hung out to dry. As the last of the sun's rays faded we settled into our snug site. The gorge took on a quiet serenity as the light slowly diminished. In the distance the roaring waterfall was just audible. Later, stars began to appear overhead—the tranquility of the place was overwhelming.

Our conversations around the fire centred on meal preparations with due comparisons being made of the finished products, and on our planned canyoning trips for the remainder of the summer.

was getting late now we examined it closely. Although reasonably suitable we decided to press on mindful of the long climb out the following day and that time saved now could be useful tomorrow. The river swung directly south. The banks became choked with piles of driftwood—the residue of high water-levels in past seasons.

As we continued the Deep began to reassert its grip upon the river. Steep and foreboding the walls again rose up forcing the stream along a torrid path. With direct sunlight beginning to dwindle in the gorge a series of very long pools now barred our way. With no possible immediate camping areas we lowered our tired bodies into the water. Swimming with a loaded pack at the end of a long day in what proved to be lengthy water-passages was extremely demanding. Eventually we reached the opposite side only to be faced with another taxing swim, beyond a short scramble round intervening boulders. Keeping our momentum up we plunged straight in, occasionally treading water, hoping for the odd submerged rock from which to push forward. Again we reached the far shore. A small, sloping

Retiring late, I drifted off to sleep under a brilliant array of stars.

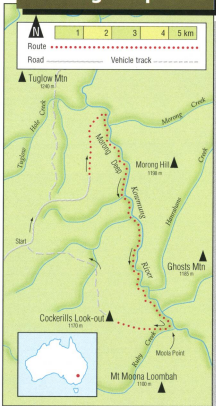
We were away early the following morning. The sun had just begun to creep into the gorge, a golden hue reflecting across the Kowmung's deep waters. We crossed the lip of the falls treading carefully in the swiftly flowing water. One slip here and you would be instantly swept over the drop. Passing to the far side we searched for a way down the granite step. A tricky, backward down-climb aided by a swaying, dead tree soon had the group assembled at the base. Ahead an impassable pool awaited. The first swim of the day had come earlier than expected. The water was very invigorating at that time of the morning as we passed the vertical cliffs hugging the water-line. Another fall greeted us on the far side. Beaching on a smooth rock slab we left the pool and traversed to the fall's far side. It dropped approximately six metres. Lowering our packs on a doubled-up hand-line we then carefully picked out a spot to leap after our gear. Everyone went deep but there were no problems with hidden rocks this time.

Pressing forward we easily skirted round several more long pools, the awakening sun producing beautiful reflections across their smooth surfaces. Beyond the next bend we were confronted with a succession of superb pools interconnected by narrow, chiselled channels and surrounded by smooth, sculptured cliffs rising 50 metres up the ravine. The whole scene had a symmetry, each wave of rock folding and blending into ongoing layers.

We ascended an initial step and then deftly clung along a steep slope high above the gushing river, our sand-shoes seeking out the slightest indentations to afford better grip. Once we were safely downstream we luxuriated in a swim, diving and bombing into a huge water-hole. The upper reaches could only be attained with a struggle against the current.

Entering a long straight the river suddenly relented. The boulders were smaller, the banks an easy walk, the pools shallow—and the cliffs disappeared. The Deep had finished. Hanrahans Creek flowed in from the north. We consulted the map and pushed on to Moola Point at the Ruby Creek confluence. Arriving there at lunch-time we ate a leisurely meal in the shade of a huge river oak, contemplating the strenuous climb out, but more notably thinking of our passage through one of the really great river gorges in eastern Australia. ■

Morong Deep area



David Carmichael (see Contributors in *Wild* no 21) began bushwalking while at school, then branched into other outdoor pursuits—kayaking, cross-country skiing, caving and canyoning. He has walked and kayaked in his home State of New South Wales, in Victoria, Tasmania and New Zealand and has ventured underground both in Australia and in Thailand.

WILD BUSHWALKING



BERT'S ALPS



Bert Bennett looks back on a lifetime of walking and skiing in Australia's high country. A portrait by *Matthew Higgins*



Top, cattlemen's huts were the usual form of accommodation for Bert and his companions: Charlie Hill at the King River Hut, Victoria. Middle, breaking up packing-cases of food, carried to 'Hill 60' by pack-horses before a ski trip on the Bogong High Plains, Victoria, in the early 1940s. Bottom, Kellys Hut, Bogong High Plains, late 1930s. Bert Bennett. Pages 56 and 57, Bert on Mt Aggie, Brindabellas, Australian Capital Territory. Page 57 (inset), Bert demonstrates knotted ropes used for climbing on skis. Matthew Higgins

It may seem a little grandiloquent to refer to Australia's ancient, worn-down mountains—such as Mts Kosciusko, Bogong and Bimberri—as 'Alps'. That term conjures up European images of Matterhorn-shaped peaks with sharp summits towering into the heavens, quite unlike our weathered, round-shouldered veterans.

But lately that word has come into common usage among Australian lovers of the high country of the south-east of the continent. Writers such as Elyne Mitchell—our most prolific mountain author—have contributed to this process by producing books which have used this term; for example, her *Australia's Alps* in 1946. Today the National Parks that cover much of the snow country (the Alpine, Kosciusko and Namadgi National Parks) are collectively known as the Australian Alps National Parks.

Their area is not a very big part of Australia (it is, in fact, less than one per cent) but the Alps have a grand scale all their own. Stretching for over 500 kilometres through the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Victoria and incorporating our highest peaks, they have been attracting bushwalkers and skiers for well over a century.

Generally speaking, these recreational users of the high country tend to stick to their own State patch. Victorians tend to ski or walk mainly south of the NSW border; Sydneysiders stick to the Snowy Mountains; Canberrans visit the Snowies and their closer neighbours, the Brindabellas. Relatively few people have intensively enjoyed the full length of the Alps. Bert Bennett is one of those few. And Bert is also one of the few who have pursued mountain interests over such a long period—six decades.

Born in 1917, Bert grew up in Richmond during the Depression. Life in this congested Melbourne suburb was not easy. 'It was very much an inner-city childhood. The acute Depression times had a profound influence on our lives', recalls Bert. He remembers when notorious criminal Squizzy Taylor was thought to have blown up a nearby shop and how talk of Squizzy's death by shooting was all the rage at school. Bert's father worked at an iron and steel works while his mother supplemented the family income with her pedal sewing-machine. Bert and his older sister and brother concentrated on their studies and rarely went out: 'I went to the pictures once in five years.' Train trips to places such as Ferntree Gully—which now cowers just beyond the fringes of Melbourne's suburban sprawl—were a rare treat providing a brief glimpse of the longed-for bush.

Bert became a flour-tax inspector at the tender age of seventeen. He played cricket and followed Richmond's football fortunes ('I was born a Tigers' supporter'). But he wanted something else: 'I was always fascinated, through books,

with what lay beyond the immediate Melbourne area. I wanted to get out there at the first opportunity.' That chance came about 1936 when he purchased a Melbourne Walking Club guide to bushwalks. Soon he joined the club and was participating regularly in its active walks programme.

At first the bushwalks were close to Melbourne (particularly in the Warburton area) and included coastal trips. The Victorian Alps seemed so far away in those carefree days—just to get to Mt Donna Buang was a big achievement. Then, over Christmas 1937, the club mounted a big trip to the high country. Bert and 21 others (with pack-horses carrying the gear) trekked over Mts Feathertop and Hotham to the Bogong High Plains and Mt Bogong itself. The journey introduced Bert to some of Victoria's most spectacular country; the unique high-country flora was not lost on him either.

Soon he was making other trips to the mountains and the onerous tramp from the Delatite River up Mt Stirling and Mt Cobbler, past Dandongade Falls, over Mt Speculation and the Crosscut Saw, over the aptly named Mt Buggy, over Mt Howitt and down the Howqua River became a firm favourite. Bert wrote in the club journal of Mt Speculation: 'It commands a scene of magnificence—the most rugged part of Victoria, razor ridges, great chasms and gigantic rock walls.' Those views into seemingly bottomless river valleys have stayed with Bert all his life. 'To do that trip in those days was a pretty adventurous thing', he says, reflecting on the convenience afforded by the access roads that have since been cut into this area.

Some of the longer trips left the walkers particularly dirty and dishevelled. Bert recalls that after a big trip from Tawonga over 'the tops' to Harrietville, upon arriving at the latter town 'we must have looked pretty disreputable. Nevertheless we dined in good style at the Snowline Hotel.'

Bert's first experience of snow was accidental. He set off for the Baw Baws during Easter 1937 with Ray Northrop and Reg van Nooten. The three had not yet learned the advantages of proper rucksacks and simply carried their gear in swags over their shoulders. After a couple of days they were behind time and needed to reach Whitlaw Hut. Snow started to fall and while this was at first a novelty the situation soon became serious. Darkness was descending, the track was snowed over and the wind was howling. Believing the hut to be out of reach, the walkers got into the lee of a big rock and huddled into their sleeping-bags for the night (they had no tent).

By next morning the weather had moderated a little and an attempt was made to find the right way. On going over the rock they found Whitlaw

Hut—a mere 200 metres away. Two Scotsmen in the hut immediately built up the fire for the wayfarers ('we were very, very wet and very, very cold', says Bert) and filled them with porridge, which saved the day.

Despite this dramatic introduction to snow, Bert and a number of friends became keen ski tourists. In those days before widespread private car ownership, and with wartime petrol rationing to contend with as well, Bert came to know the Melbourne train timetable as intimately as he knew his walking maps. Just to start a trip was a matter of catching a train to the nearest station, then travelling either by local mail car or taxi service—and then sometimes by pack-horses—before the walk or ski tour actually began.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s Bert and his friends undertook week-long ski tours on the Bogong High Plains, making a base at the 1903 Fitzgeralds Hut, the slab-walled Kellys Hut, the Scout Hut or the government-built Cope Hut. From the Fitzgerald family's Shannonnale property the skiers were assisted by George 'Dad' Fitzgerald and his son Brendan, who supplied and led two pack-horses (at eight shillings each) carrying the week's food. After making the 850 metre climb to 'Hill 60' the food was unloaded and distributed among the skiers for the final leg to the hut.

During trips to Mts Hotham and Feathertop Norwegian-born Eric Johnson came to the skiers' aid. Contracted to sled supplies to the Hotham Heights Chalet, Johnson also took the ski tourists' packs up the 1300 metre climb on Bon Accord Spur. Bert has fond memories of Johnson's 'magnificent

draught-horses' with their specially made snow-shoes fitted by the resourceful Norwegian—surely one of the most unusual, and colourful, forms of transport seen in the Australian Alps.

On one trip the weather turned very bad while Bert, Charlie Hill and Colin Feraday were staying at Diamantina Hut. It was still howling when they had to leave and the wind had blown snow off the treacherous Razorback leaving stretches of bare ice. At one point Charlie and Bert were standing at either end of a cornice when it collapsed; luckily they didn't go with it (many readers will be aware that experienced skier, and *Wild* correspondent, Tom Kneen died a few years ago when a cornice on nearby Mt Feathertop gave way). As they approached Harrietville on the way down they passed another, older, man coming up. The young skiers exclaimed, 'it's terrible up there' and endeavoured to dissuade him from going on, but he was determined.

Next night, with Bert and his companions back in Melbourne, the headlines talked of a search for this lost skier. He was found and, although in a poor state, he recovered. The papers are believed to have said that the skier had decided to go on because of the encouragement given to him by three young men whom he'd met when setting out! Bert declines to name



the man, but reveals that he was a leading political figure of the day. Bert also had to deal with his own boss who, upon hearing about the blizzard, rebuked Bert for leaving the security of the hut and skiing out in such dangerous conditions. 'But we thought we'd have been in trouble if we *hadn't* got back to work', laughs Bert today.

Although in the militia when war started in 1939, Bert could not serve immediately because he was in a reserved occupation. During one mountain trip when in Wodonga he and two friends were followed by the Military Police, who then had civilian police intercept them. Accused of being troops absent without leave, the walkers had some pretty fast talking to do but eventually proved that they were not AWOL. Later in the war Bert served at Royal Australian Air Force radar stations in New Guinea, at Port Moresby and Dobodura.

A man fastidious about detail, Bert kept records of his Victorian trips including cumulative distances and elevations of mountains climbed. Between 1937 and 1945 he trekked over 8000 kilometres in the bush and in 1942 bushwalked or skied for almost a quarter of the year. Family legend has it that one year he was away in the bush every weekend.

Late in 1946 Bert moved to Canberra. On his first weekend in the national capital he was out exploring the Brindabellas. Greatly impressed by the ACT's mountain ranges he wasted no time in joining the Canberra Alpine Club. As the CAC was then purely a ski club with little official interest in bushwalking, several walkers decided to form a separate walking club. The Canberra Walking and Touring Club came into being at the Hotel Kingston on 17 April 1947 with Jack Leslie as president and Bert as secretary. Soon to join the new club was a young librarian recently arrived from Victoria, Jess Trevaskis. In 1949 Bert and Jess were married.

Because of post-war petrol rationing push-bikes were used as one means of getting to walk starting-points. For those places further away from Canberra, Ainslie carrier 'Darkie' Price provided a truck for the walkers. Walks were taken in the Tinderry Range—the bold chain that so abruptly rises east of Michelago—and at Mt Kosciusko. Bert's favourite walking area near Mt Kosciusko is from Guthega up on to the Main Range, where from peaks like Mt Twynam the Geehi valley drops precipitously away below your feet and the rolling tops are covered by a magical summer wildflower display.

There were also walks in the Brindabellas and the CAC's 1938-vin-

tage Mt Franklin Chalet was a useful base on a number of occasions. Once in the late 1940s Bert descended the steep East Face of the range into the Cotter valley with Alan Bourne and Jack Leslie. Dropping past Ginini Falls (the ACT's highest waterfall) the three continued their trackless way down to the Cotter River. Steep slopes and dense scrub forced them to leave the banks and walk in the river for much of the way; small riverside flats were only just big enough for their three tents at night. When asked whether he had then known of the 1914 ordinance forbidding unauthorised camping in the national capital's water catchment area, Bert laughs, 'we weren't aware of it at all!'

Through the 1950s Bert's walking interests were better catered for by an evolving CAC, and his small club folded. Bert and Jess were both active in

“Darkness was descending, the track was snowed over and the wind was howling. Believing the hut to be out of reach, the walkers got into the lee of a big rock and huddled into their sleeping-bags for the night...”

the CAC's skiing activities, joining in work parties at Mt Franklin and helping to clear regrowth on the ski runs. Although Mt Franklin was essentially a downhill ski area there were still cross-country tours such as the one on which the club truck became stuck in the snow somewhere back towards Bulls Head and it was therefore necessary to ski the rest of the way.

Just as he had been in the Melbourne Walking Club, Bert was a committee member of the CAC and led trips. He and Jess were also in the fledgling YMCA Ski Club and Bert, through leading trips and writing in the club newsletter *Christie*, helped to encourage other 'Y' skiers to go touring, particularly in the Snowy Mountains.

As in Victoria, simple huts provided accommodation during cross-country forays in the Mt Kosciusko area. It is a truism among skiers that the worst weather is the best remembered. In about 1958 Bert, Bryan Haig (owner of the ill-fated Bogong Lodge) and a mixed group of Melbourne and Canberra skiers were beset by blizzards at Mawsons Hut. Intent on reaching Whites River Hut, after three days at Mawsons the group

decided to make a dash for it. Visibility was virtually nil but with a compass and by placing snow-gum branches in the snow behind them to mark a retreat track if needed, the tourers ventured out.

At a point where they calculated that Tin Hut should have been, miraculously the fog broke for an instant and in front of the group was a geometrical shape clad in snow. It was Tin Hut, half buried. The skiers looked inside only to find that there was a foot of ice on the floor. They continued on their way. Edging round ice-encrusted Gungartan, Bert recalls how the spare ski that was being trailed clattered over the ice, tugging at the end of its cord. Finally, below 'Powder Knob', the party encountered lovely powder snow: 'The most beautiful snow I've skied on', says Bert. At Whites River Hut Canberra skiers Tim Ingram and Harry Black were more than a little surprised to see this motley troupe ski in from out of the blizzard.

Owing to the pressures of his senior position in the Department of National Development, Bert had less time for his outdoor pursuits from the late 1960s on. But since retiring in 1982 he has had no trouble filling his time. He last skied in 1991 and still bushwalks regularly although his pack might be a little lighter than it (or his swag) was 60 years ago. The friendships he has made along his life's track are prized possessions still.

Bert has seen much change in the Australian Alps during those 60 years. The hard climb up Mt Buller has been replaced by a sealed road and the simple hut at Cow Camp is now the site of the Mt Buller resort. Road networks have come in the wake of the Kiewa and Snowy Mountains hydroelectricity schemes. Perisher Valley and Smiggins boasted one or two old huts when he skied there in the 1950s. Ski tows have proliferated. In the 1930s 'we never saw anybody—we'd have the mountains to ourselves'. Today three million visitors a year enter the NSW high country alone.

Bert has mixed feelings about all this development. It is a good thing that so many people are able to enjoy the Alps and naturally most of those people will want facilities; resort accommodation and access roads are inevitable. But the extent of all these inroads is of some concern. While Bert enjoys visiting the Mt Buller village, 'if you get on Mt Stirling and look across to Mt Buller, it looks dreadful... I'm dead against development at Mt Stirling...and the same thing at Kosciusko. Let's try to severely limit the developments to particular areas.' ■

*Matthew Higgins is a Canberra skier, bushwalker and freelance historian. His latest book, *Skis on the Brindabellas*, was reviewed in Wild no 57.*

WILD TREKKING

INCA GOLD

A tale of high adventure in the mist-enshrouded Andes,
by Rowhan Marshall



As the bus meandered its way north from Lima along the pot-holed Pan American Highway I gazed out of the window at the seemingly endless desert and wondered whether I could justify the expense of a trip such as this. My motive for travelling to Ecuador was an 18th century document describing in detail the route to the fabled, ancient treasure of Quito.

The Spaniard Valverde wrote the document on his deathbed for the King of Spain. Valverde married the daughter of the chief of the Inca village of Pillaro and as a wedding gift the chief led him into the nearby Llanganatti Mountains and presented him with precious metals and stones taken from a vast treasure which was hidden there. Valverde eventually returned to Spain a wealthy nobleman.

The treasure came to lie deep in the Llanganattis as the result of a series of dramatic events in the 16th century. When the Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro and his band of 180 followers arrived in Peru they were hungry for fame and fortune. Though their numbers were small their steel-edged swords and war-horses proved to be decisive. The Inca King, Atahualpa, was captured at Cajamarca in 1533. His fabulous ransom—a sum of gold and silver—was eventually paid; however, Pizarro retracted his promise of freedom and had the king garrotted.

The king's general, Ruminahui, fought on against the invading Spanish for two more years. When Sebastian de Benalcázar arrived in Quito in 1534 he found that the city had been razed to the ground by the general to prevent it falling into Spanish hands. Ruminahui had taken the town's treasure and travelled south towards his home village of Pillaro with an escort of 10,000 armed warriors. The weight of the treasure has been estimated at 750 tonnes. The general was eventually captured and tortured by the Spanish but never revealed the treasure's location. Frustrated, the Spanish had Ruminahui burnt at the stake in the main plaza of Quito, an unworthy end for such a brave and tenacious adversary.

I arrived in the picturesque capital of Quito after a taxing 40 hours on buses only to discover that I had been fortunate to cross the frontier. A major conflict had just erupted between Ecuador and Peru over a large tract of disputed territory in the Amazon Basin.

The South American Explorers' Club in Quito provided an ideal base as I set about finding suitable companions for my venture into the Llanganattis. The area's reputation as an inhospitable mountain wilderness of cold, drenching rains and impenetrable vegetation made me wonder what sort of response I would get. Eventually I met up with another Australian, Stuart Dobbie. He was on 'the grand tour', climbing the

three highest peaks in Ecuador. His character and his tall, rangy build appeared to promise the resilience that was needed for such a trip. I also recruited two Ecuadorians: Bladimir, a mountain guide whom I had met while climbing Illinizas Norte; and his companion, Louis, who had spent several days at Laguna Yanacocha, the 'black lake' mentioned in Valverde's text.



The three-hour bus trip south to Ambato along the 'Avenue of the Volcanoes' lived up to its reputation. The snowy summit of Cotapaxi shone starkly white in the equatorial sun. Eucalyptus forests and groves lay like patchwork in the valleys, dramatic evidence of Ecuador's massive reforestation programme. In Ambato we boarded a local bus which wound its way along the sheer-sided ravine carved out by the Rio Patate and arrived in Pillaro, the first place mentioned in the Valverde guide. After the busy streets of Quito it was a relief to arrive in this small, quiet, provincial town.

Eager to be on our way we heaved our bulging packs into a local ute and headed for the *altiplano* (high plains) 30 kilometres away. As we gained altitude the warm, sheltered valleys gave way to the stark exposure of the *paramo*, a region of wet, peaty soils, hard grasses, cushion plants and small, herbaceous vegetation. We paid our driver and watched in silence as he disappeared in a trail of dust. With dusk approaching and the temperature plummeting, as I watched Bladimir and Louis pitch their tent it became apparent that they had limited experience in camping. My concern grew when I discovered that they had no first aid kit and barely enough food for the trip. I realised that I had taken too much for granted when accepting them and this became more evident in the days that followed.

We awoke to a clear, still, frosty morning and as I stood gazing upon this alien landscape of ragged, knife-edged ridges and plunging ravines I began to

comprehend how men like Eugene Brenner could devote 27 years of their lives looking for the lost Inca gold.

With a sense of anticipation we headed eastward towards our next landmark, Laguna Los Anteojos, 'The Spectacle Lake'. We followed a track which contoured the hillside, staying out of the boggy flats. By mid-morning we had descended to Laguna Yanacocha and passed it on our left as Valverde

directed. My mood was one of confidence as the guide appeared to coincide with the topographic maps I had obtained in Quito.

With the clouds rolling in from the Amazon Basin we took a compass bearing on the peak we had identified as Margasitas, another major feature referred to in the guide. It stood out starkly on the far horizon as we set it in our sights and then was obscured by swirling clouds.

We stood for a few more brief moments taking a last look at the vast *paramo*, then descended into the densely vegetated cloud forest.

The canopy quickly engulfed us; epiphytes hung thickly on every limb, sprouting orchids, mosses, lichens and bromeliads. We were soon lathered in sweat as the sticky, black mud threatened to suck the boots off our feet, making each step a determined effort. Despite the state of the track, we made good progress following the Rio Golpe as it travelled its turbulent path towards the Amazon. As we descended it became obvious that Valverde had taken an ancient route higher up on the valley's side. Our plan was to intersect his route in the days ahead.

We stopped for lunch by a tributary of the Rio Golpe. I tried my hand at panning in the cold, clear stream but did not produce any colour. When I rejoined the others Bladimir informed me that he had sliced his toe open with one of our machetes. I dressed the wound hoping it would not become infected among the mud and sweat. As the afternoon wore on we passed three small clearings in the

jungle, where resilient farmers eked out a subsistence for the three months of the year when the weather made living in this region tolerable. By late afternoon we arrived at the tributary which would give us the only possible access to Margasitas and, we hoped, the rest of Valverde's route. The last hour of daylight was spent cutting a clearing for our tents among some thickets of bamboo. That evening the full moon announced its presence casting eerie shadows upon the walls of our tents but giving us the hope of stable weather for the coming days.

We awoke to a clear sky and the squabble of parrots high in the canopy. Soon we were immersed in icy water as we clambered our way upstream over slippery, moss-covered boulders. Our progress was slowed by a series of waterfalls, each drop plummeting more than 20 metres. Below one of these waterfalls Louis discovered a vein of mineralisation in the bedrock. It appeared to the four of us to be gold. We spent the next hour waist-deep in water excitedly extracting the mineral with machetes and tent-pegs. By early afternoon we were climbing again, our ears buffeted by the constant roar of water upon rock. In places the tributary formed vertical rock sluices; our only option was to detour into the jungle. Hacking with our machetes, we climbed rather than walked, our feet rarely touching the ground; often we found ourselves among a vast entanglement of vines and limbs many metres off the ground. Drained of energy and numbed by hours in the chilly waters, by laborious effort we extended two tiny rock platforms using stream boulders and

partially erected our tents by a major tributary junction.

That evening we slept the sleep of exhaustion. We awoke to clear skies and the sight of humming-birds darting among the flowering heaths, deftly stealing nectar. I reluctantly returned to my bowl of congealed porridge and pondered our situation. If the weather turned and we had heavy rain our retreat would be cut off by a series of impassable waterfalls. Any serious injury would mean a slow, precarious extraction by land. I had already read enough accounts of people perishing in the Llanganatti to be thankful that I'd had the foresight to bring along a rope and harness. We decided to split up for a one-hour reconnaissance of the two tributaries. Bladimir and I followed a promising route which appeared to flatten out up higher; we also discovered

Left, a rare view of Del Topo (more or less) free of its usual blanket of cloud. **Page 61**, soaked to the skin, Mark staggers through the mist on the last day in the Llanganatti. All photos Rowhan Marshall

VALVERDE'S GUIDE

Placed in the town of Pillara, ask for the farm of Moya and sleep a good distance above it; if the day be fine, look to the east so that thy back be towards the town of Ambato, and from thence thou shalt perceive the three Cerro Llanganatti, in the form of a triangle, on whose declivity there lieth a lake, made by hand, into which the ancients threw the gold they had prepared for the ransom of the Inca when they heard of his death. From the same Cerro Guapa thou mayest see also the forest, and in it a clump of Sangurimas standing out of the said forest, and another clump which they call Flechas (arrow cane), and these clumps are the principal mark for which thou shalt aim, leaving them on the left hand. Go forward from Guapa in the direction and with the signals indicated, and a good way ahead thou shalt come on a wide morass. Coming out on the other side, thou wilt see two small lakes called Los Anteojos, from having between them a point of land like a nose. From this place thou mayest again descrie the Cerro Llanganatti, the same as thou sawest them from the top of Guapa, and I warn thee to leave the said lakes on the left, and that in which is a sleeping-place. There thou must leave thy horses, for they can go no farther. Following now on foot in the same direction, thou shalt come on a great black lake, the which leave on thy left hand, and in such a way that thou mayest reach a ravine, down which comest a waterfall, at having gone a little way in the forest, seek out the hut which served to sleep in or the remains of it. Go on thy way the following day through the forest in the same direction, till thou reachest another deep, dry ravine, across which thou must throw a bridge and pass over it cautiously, for the ravine is very deep; that is, if thou succeedest in not finding the pass which

exists. Go forward and look for the signs of another sleeping-place, which, I assure thee, thou canst not fail to see in the fragments of Indians are continually passing along there. Go on thy way and thou shalt see a mountain which is all margasitas (pyrites), the which leave on thy left hand. I warn thee that thou must go around it in this fashion. On this side thou wilt find a pajonal (pasture) in a small plain, which having crossed thou wilt come on a canon between two hills, which is the Way of the Inca. From thence as thou goest along thou shalt see in the form of a church porch. Having come through the canon and gone a good distance beyond, thou wilt perceive a cascade which descends from an offshoot of the Cerro Llanganatti and runneth into a quaking-bog on the right hand; and without, passing the stream in the said bog hand what thou shalt gather at the bottom is grains of gold. To ascend the mountain, leave the bog and go along to the right, pass above the cascade, going around the offshoot of the mountain. And if by chance the mouth of the scabon be closed with certain herbs which they call Salvaje, remove them, and thou wilt find the entrance. And on the left-hand side of the mountain thou mayest see the Guayra, [what the ancients called 'the Guayra' and where they smelted metals] which is nailed with golden nails. And to reach the third mountain, if thou canst not pass in front of the scabon, it is the same thing to pass behind it, for the water of the lake falleth into it. If thou lovest thy way in the forest, seek the river, follow it on the right bank; lower down take to the beach, and thou wilt reach the canon in such sort that, although thou seekest to pass it, thou wilt not find where; climb therefore the mountain on the right hand, and in this manner thou canst by no means miss thy way. ■

more mineralisation. The consensus was to explore our route as it roughly followed the direction indicated by Valverde. We forded on upwards through the stream, carefully working our way along the seemingly endless series of rapids.

The bog from which Valverde had extracted portions of his wealth was still nowhere in sight. By late afternoon the gradient had increased dramatically and we were confronted by vertical waterfalls, hemmed in by a vast web of vegetation. Stuart and I roped up to negotiate these obstacles and scout ahead. The further we pushed on, the more difficult and dangerous each section became. We had travelled a little over two kilometres in two days and still had to ascend through 400 metres of cloud forest to the *paramo* to reach the vicinity in which the ancients had hidden their treasure. We had not been able to pick up any further signs mentioned by Valverde.

All of us felt a strong sense of foreboding in this cold, wet, shadowy place with its constant roar of water. It was time to retreat. Once the decision had been made the mood lifted and smiles of relief broke out on every face. Two days later we arrived back at the Rio Golpe. In a small clearing we met a lean, weather-beaten farmer who invited us to his thatched hut. We struggled to keep pace as he travelled quickly and efficiently along the narrow track, his machete an extension of his arm. He shared his meagre supplies with us and cooked a delicious meal of guinea-pig, trout and rice. We sat around his cheery fire washing our banquet down with cups of

steaming, sweet, black coffee. Glad of our company, he talked late into the evening, telling us many strange stories about the mysterious Llanganattis. Apparently the year before two Columbians had cut down a tree near his hut and discovered a skeleton—the skull had had a diamond embedded in it. We listened intently, contemplating our return trip.

The following day the farmer accompanied us on the two-day climb back to the *altiplano* as he was returning to Pillaro to resupply. His cowering, emaciated dog—who had devoured our scraps by the camp fire the previous evening—strayed off the track and was never seen again.

After such a pristine wilderness Quito was a shock to the senses. The mineralisation we had found turned out to be nuggets of pyrites. This disappointment strengthened our resolve to approach by way of the exposed ridges of the Cerro Llanganattis this time, which would save us days of cutting through walls of vegetation in the lower valleys. Stuart and I would need a strong, competent party for this, so I once again turned my attention towards the South American Explorers' Club. Mark Thurbur, who worked at the club, was keen to go. He was employed part time as a jungle guide, was a competent climber and a qualified geologist. The fourth member of our team was Valerie Hahn; she, too, was a climber and an experienced wilderness walker. When told of the potential dangers her only remark was, 'When can we go?' Mark needed to arrange time off from work so Stuart

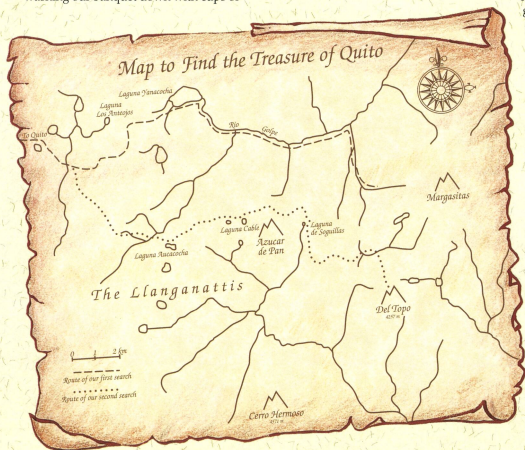
and I took the opportunity to head north and climb Cayambe, a picturesque and memorable peak with a summit of 5790 metres.

We reunited at Pillars, where we spent the night. Word had got out that four *gringos* were in town and intended to enter the Llanganattis. That evening a drunken Ecuadorian confronted Stuart with a loaded rifle and insisted on leading us into the Llanganattis. In a very diplomatic manner, Stuart managed to talk him out of it.

Further research into the history of the lost treasure had revealed that two English naval officers, Barth Blake and George Chapman, had entered the Llanganattis in 1887. They had obtained information from Richard Spruce, an English botanist who had spent considerable time in the region. Blake and Chapman appear to have been extremely fortunate, for they discovered a huge gold-mine in the cloud forests near the Rio Golpe. They then located 'The Way of the Incas' which took them up to the ancients' smelting towers. It was here that they put the Valverde guide to good use and claimed eventually to have discovered a cave which contained a vast horde of treasure. Blake later wrote, 'Maybe you don't believe me when I tell you. There are thousands of gold and silver pieces of Inca and pre-Inca handicrafts, the most beautiful goldsmith works you can imagine: life-sized human figures beaten out of gold and silver; birds; animals; corn stalks of silver with golden ears of corn; gold and silver flowers; pots full of the most incredible jewellery; golden vases filled with emeralds in gilded goblets and a thousand other artefacts...'

Blake and Chapman sent their porters back by way of the Rio Golpe and then set off along the high ridges towards Pillaro with precious stones, 18 golden artefacts and food for four days. The weather closed in on them near Laguna Aucococha—'Savage Lake'—producing driving rain and snow. They became lost for many days. Chapman eventually perished but Blake managed to reach Pillaro, more dead than alive. He returned to England to organise an expedition to retrieve the treasure. On the return sea-passage to South America he disappeared overboard, believed to have been the victim of a conspiracy. However, like many treasure-hunters, Blake was a cautious man; he had left a description of the route to the treasure in England.

We had been able to obtain small portions of this information to help us to piece together this elusive jigsaw. Our



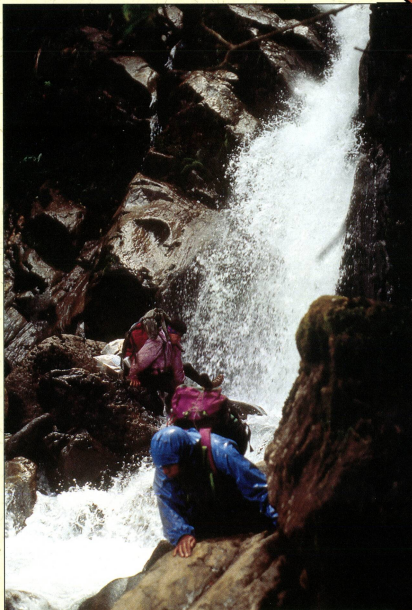
destination was the Western Face of Del Topo, an isolated peak standing 4257 metres high. We now had additional signs to look for: 'the reclining lady' and 'a black pyramid'.

Stuart had been ill with a stomach complaint for a number of days and reluctantly had to withdraw from the trip; we all knew that it would be an exacting ordeal both physically and mentally. We redistributed our ten days' food and reorganised the communal gear: climbing rope, harness, grappling-hook and machetes. We said our farewells; Stuart would have a vehicle waiting for us on our return. In overcast conditions we departed for the *altiplano*.

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As we toiled our way slowly up to the high saddle in light rain and swirling mist I was once again vividly reminded that carrying heavy packs at altitude is an exercise in patience and perseverance. After several hours we gained the saddle and descended into a featureless, rain-soaked region known appropriately as the Labyrinth. We wound our way round countless earthen mounds in cold, drenching rain. At times visibility was reduced to a few metres. Our compasses and altimeter became vital for direction finding. Only our watches enabled us to keep track of the time as the sun disappeared; we were to glimpse it just once during the next nine days. That evening we thankfully set up camp somewhere in the vicinity of Laguna Aucococha, where Chapman had perished so many years before. A cold, grey morning of depressingly persistent drizzle and mist greeted us. The ground was awash and the strange sponge-like vegetation squirted water with every step.

We abruptly came upon the lake—I was standing in it. Scouting around its shore line we picked up a track which headed towards Laguna Cable, another glacial lake, nestled on the flanks of Azucar de Pan—possibly one of the three peaks mentioned by Valverde. Although the track was indistinct it enabled us to make good progress and eventually delivered us on to a sheer-sided ridgeline that plunged into the cloud below. We climbed more than walked, each foothold becoming our next handhold. The clouds would part



briefly revealing to us our precarious location among this vast wilderness. We had entered into a world of ridges, ravines and water. By late afternoon we arrived at Laguna de Soguillas, a small, shallow lake perched in a hanging valley at 3680 metres. We hacked away with our machetes clearing a suitable area of relatively well-drained ground on which to erect our tents. The lake, depending on how you interpret the Valverde guide, may be the body of water into which the ancients threw some of their treasure. I dragged its bottom using our grappling-hook and climbing rope. Mark insisted that any treasure would be buried under metres of accumulated silt produced by run-off and volcanic eruptions. Somewhat dejected I retired to the relatively dry haven of my tent and watched the evening firefly display. When I shook a disgruntled frog out of my boot the next morning I realised that the ground had reached saturation point.

We meandered our way through relatively open country, occasionally

Bladimir and Louis negotiate a waterfall on the ascent to Margasitas during the first trip.

cutting markers for our return trip. In the taller arrow-grass we encountered the tracks of tapirs. These endangered mammals weigh up to 200 kilograms and can grow to two metres in length. They are generally active at night and luckily are browsers and frugivores. Their massive bulk carved excellent tracks for us; however, in the sheltered depressions resilient forms of dense, stunted forest persisted. Our cutting arms were soon swung back into action. By late morning we came upon a dilapidated lean-to. Randy Mossman, an American based in Quito who has spent six years searching for the treasure, told me about hunters who sometimes venture into this region to shoot deer, tapirs, bears and pumas. It made me sad to think that even in a wilderness such as this these threatened species were being harassed by humans.

We crested a small saddle and gazed down upon an incredibly beautiful valley hemmed in on three sides by the massive bulk of Del Topo and other peaks. Cautiously we descended a recent landslide, then cut our way through to the valley floor. Two crystal-clear lakes and an adjoining river split the valley. Scattered around the lower slopes were stands of frailejones. These spectacular plants have vertical stems, some over two metres high. At the apex is a rosetta of soft, velvety leaves covered in white hairs. Valerie nicknamed them 'rabbits' ears'.

Recent tapir tracks were scattered in the river sand; their characteristic three-toed print easily spanned my outstretched hand. With this in mind, over lunch I dutifully worked on putting a good edge on my machete. The summit of Del Topo still refused to reveal itself although the lower slopes appeared very steep and heavily vegetated. Suddenly Mark yelled excitedly; he had glimpsed the upper faces through the cloud and seen a rock structure that resembled a reclining lady. Fortified by this encouraging news we doggedly plugged our way through knee-deep swamps, arriving at the higher lake which was to be the Base Camp for our ascent of the mountain. That afternoon we sighted a possible route on to an access ramp that led up towards the shrouded summit ridge. Mark confidently predicted that our 700 metre ascent would take less than half a day, so our plan was to climb with 24 hours' food and the three-person tent.

Next morning, in light rain and among swarming sand-flies, we secured Base Camp, then headed into the thick cloud forest that blanketed the flanks of Del Topo. Our half-day jaunt turned into

a ten-hour ordeal. Presently the rotting vegetation engulfed us, allowing us little room to swing our machetes. We climbed through trees covered in every imaginable epiphyte and pulled our way through vast entanglements of vines and branches. We were soon bleeding from various cuts and scratches as we hauled ourselves up vertical walls of vegetation, our hands grasping for any reliable purchase. On the rare occasions when

were its only prey. Perhaps it was using the treasure cave as its den?

We got back to camp at dusk, deciding to ration our supplies so that we could stay an extra day on the mountain. Never had hot chocolate tasted so good as it did that evening.

It rained in torrents all night, our tent and sleeping-bags were awash in puddles of muddy water. Stumbling about in the cold morning drizzle we cut drainage ditches around our sodden camp. Huddled behind our thin wall of fabric we waited for the weather to abate vainly trying to dry our sleeping-bags with the heat of our bodies. By mid-afternoon the rain squalls had subsided to a drizzle and the visibility had marginally improved. It was time to face the elements. Once again we located the summit feature and then, during a brief respite in the weather, we noticed a black pyramid of rock on the nearby skyline. I could almost feel the weight of those golden sun-discs in my hands. We contoured the area at different elevations, investigating any potential sites for a cave. As evening approached we had to admit defeat. Del Topo is a special place; we all felt it. The mountain's presence was accentuated by its jagged summit ridgeline and rapidly changing moods. It had allowed us but a brief visit, but was not yet ready to reveal all its tightly-held secrets.



our feet touched solid ground Mark and I would change leads. He appeared to be enjoying himself for some perverse reason and Valerie, who had been struggling in the first few days, showed her resilience and did not utter a single word of complaint. I was fortunate to have such travelling companions on a trip as demanding as this.

The constant cutting and hauling began to drain our resources, so we used drainage lines as access routes up the mountain. When the exposed bedrock became impassable we re-entered the all-engulfing forest. At 3900 metres we gained the *paramo*. It was a relief to be out of the claustrophobic vegetation. In scudding cloud and drizzle we reached the summit ridge at 4100 metres and set about pitching our tent in the shelter of a rocky enclave. Once camp was secure we set off to investigate the mountain. Valerie and Mark scaled the main summit at 4257 metres and I skirted its western flanks in search of the treasure cave. In the late-afternoon gloom I spotted some recent puma prints. These cats can reach 2.7 metres in length and weigh up to 100 kilograms. I hoped that the deer of which I had found remains

An hour before sunset the weather improved. The clouds parted and we saw the sun! Before us lay a vista to which no camera could do justice. We were perched above the valley clouds on an island of rock, gazing out over an area that seemed impossibly rugged. Cerro Hermoso, the peak that had preoccupied so many treasure-hunters, stood out majestically to the south, its 4571 metre summit catching the last of the sun's rays. We were allowed only a glimpse but for me that was enough reward for all our toil. As the sun sank beneath the cloud bank a swirling mist rolled up from the valley enveloping us once again in its icy embrace of rain and drizzle. The expedition had turned into one of self-preservation rather than exploration. The season for the Llanganattis was finished. Morning produced more rain squalls and a temperature that refused to rise above 5°C.

It was time to retreat from the mountain. I was concerned about the danger of hypothermia, especially if we lost our way in the cloud cover and ended up on impassable cliff-faces. We broke camp, a wretched business in the mud and driving rain. With our sodden packs we scurried off towards the

uninviting cloud forest. The drainage lines we had used to reach the summit ridge had turned into gushing waterfalls. Soaked to the skin and chilled by the icy waters, we focused our attention on the relative safety of the valley below. By midday, cut and bleeding, covered in mud and vegetation, we emerged from the cloud forest looking like creatures from a late-night horror film. We quickly re-established our camp and then retreated into the security of our sodden tents.

I sat despondent, gazing out at the unceasing rain. The Llanganatts were certainly living up to their reputation. The morning greeted us in its usual undignified manner—rain, drizzle and poor visibility. Our small party was beginning to lose motivation as thoughts now turned towards the return trip lying ahead. We ascended out of the valley and arrived back at the lean-to. Sheets of horizontal rain pelted us as we pitched our tents in the squally conditions. I set out to reconnoitre the area for alternative access routes to Del Topo but soon lost heart in the cold, wet conditions and retired to the relative comfort of my tent. Although our morale was still high and considerable banter was exchanged between tents the weather was gradually wearing us down both physically and mentally.

The following morning as we made our way towards Laguna de Soguillas a deer came bounding out of the drizzle and mist. It propped only two metres from me. It had not seen me, but sensed that something was amiss and quickly disappeared into the low, scudding cloud.

Conditions continued to deteriorate; our compass indicated that we were following the wrong ridge, a mistake which cost us two hours and precious energy. It was unnerving to realise how easy it was to become disorientated among the ravines and ridgelines that infested the region. From Laguna de Soguillas we climbed on to the skyline ridge which led back to Azucar de Pan. The ridge was totally exposed to the elements. The vague track had become a slippery, mud-soaked series of footholds and handholds. We travelled at a ridiculously slow pace, the strain showing on our faces. At last light we staggered into a clearing by the relatively sheltered shores of Laguna Cable. It had been a long, difficult day in atrocious weather. That evening I slept undisturbed until first light.

This day was to be our last in the Llanganatts. Our spirits were high even though the weather refused to clear. Once back in the Labyrinth we walked on a compass bearing, eventually reaching the high saddle. We could see the road less than three

kilometres away. However, the Llanganatts were not quite ready to relinquish their grip on us. As we pushed our way through strands of arrow-grass we came upon a boggy plateau we had to negotiate. The three of us were soon sinking to our waists in a sucking mud. We had no other option but to crawl the last 200 metres on our hands and knees. The Llanganatts had reduced us to tottering quadrupeds. I hoped that there were no male tapirs in season around here! We finally arrived, soaked to the skin, at Laguna Tambo. Stuart, true to his word, was waiting for us with a vehicle.

Our ordeal was over. Even though we had not located the treasure I feel that we learned some things about ourselves and about each other that are more important than any amount of gold and silver. Whether the hidden riches are eventually discovered or not is of no great consequence to me now; the importance lies in the journey itself and the willingness to pursue a dream in a world where practicalities appear to dominate so much of our lives. ■

Rowhan Marshall is a 32-year-old Australian who, among other things, has worked for the Royal Australian Navy as a meteorologist and diver, and as an environmental researcher. His interest in the environment and outdoor activities has led him to make a number of demanding trips overseas and within Australia. He recently completed a Bachelor of Applied Science in Parks, Recreation and Heritage.

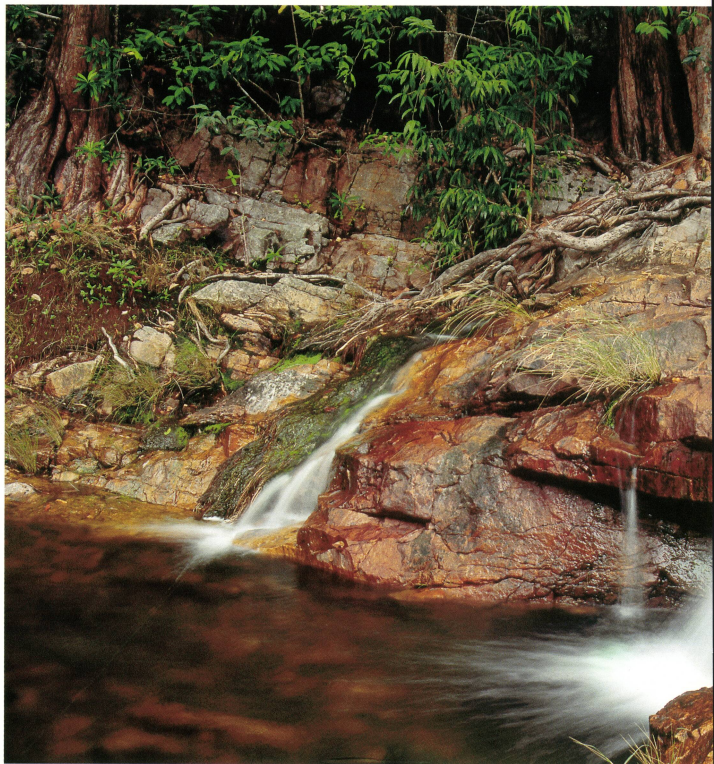
High camp on a tributary during the first trip. (Not exactly camp-fire country!)
Left, Mark and Valerie in the thick of things on the ascent of Del Topo.

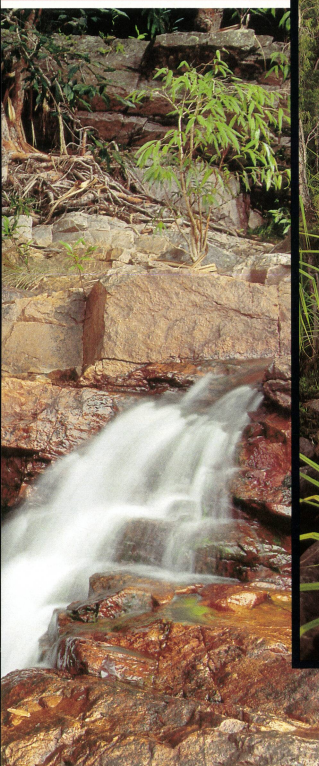




AKADU

Dream-time waters, by Andrew Cox



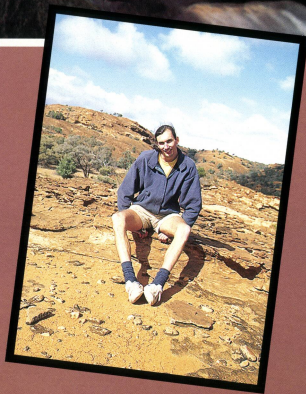


Jim Jim Falls.
Left, upper Barramundi
Creek. All photos were
taken in Kakadu
National Park,
Northern Territory.



Twin Falls Creek.

Andrew Cox lives in Sydney. He divides his time between exploring and photographing the Australian bush and working for the improved protection and management of precious wilderness areas.



TASMANIAN SHORT WALKS

A beginner's introduction to Australia's best walking,
by *Steve Robertson*



Tasmania is justifiably renowned as one of the world's finest bushwalking destinations and has many magnificent multiday walking tracks that are the envy of mainland Australia. But not all the State's bushwalking attractions require a bulging rucksack and a commitment to spend a week or more in the wilderness. Luckily, given the notoriously changeable weather, some of the Apple Isle's most spectacular scenery can be visited with only a short trip from the nearest road. Following are five walks of between a few hours' and a few days' duration which take in a representative sample of the scenery that lures beginner and expert walkers alike, season after season.

These walks provide a perfect introduction to walking in Tasmania including such icons as glacial tarns, unique alpine vegetation and shimmering views as well as the inevitable mud and the prospect of snow in high summer.

The effects of fire are obvious on Mt Rufus. Lake St Clair below. *Pete Lingard*

Everyone who wishes to enter a Tasmanian National Park needs to pay an entry fee; a range of options is available, from a one-day pass (\$2.50 a person or \$8.00 a car) to a yearly permit to enter all the State's parks (\$40). These are available at Parks & Wildlife Service offices, National Park visitors' centres and at the entrance gates to most parks. In many of Tasmania's National Parks the use of fuel stoves (as opposed to open fires) is either compulsory or recommended. Open fires are not permitted anywhere between 1 October and 30 April.

Any novice walker who samples the delights to be experienced on one of these outstanding and varied walks is bound to understand why the smallest State is the biggest draw-card for bushwalkers and is sure to return.

THE WALKS *at a glance*

GRADE

Generally easy-moderate

LENGTH

Five hours-three days

TYPE

Mountain scenery

REGION

Tasmania

BEST TIME

Summer/autumn

SPECIAL POINTS

National Park entry permit required

CRADLE MOUNTAIN-LAKE RODWAY CIRCUIT

To the casual tourist, Cradle Mountain is something to photograph after stepping out of your car at Lake Dove car-park. Those looking for a casual stroll can do the short and very easy family walks such as the Enchanted Walk or the Truganini Track.

This World Heritage Park is synonymous in the minds of many *Wild* readers with the sublime and spectacular Overland Track, a memorable five-day journey of wonder and discovery. For those who want something in between sand-shoe ease and the full five-day park experience, this loop walk taking in a host of memorable features is an ideal choice—particularly if you have just a weekend to spare and the weather is suitable. Fuel stoves must be used in this park.

Maps

Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair or *Cradle Mountain Day Walks* 1:100 000 Tasmap.

Access

Very convenient to Devonport, Burnie or Launceston by bitumen road until past the visitors' centre.

The walk

This easy to moderate walk takes about two days return.

From the Lake Dove car-park, take the Lake Rodway Track round the left side of the lake. Here you're passing through rain forest with superb views of the lake and Cradle Mountain. The track becomes steep over Hansons Peak and rather boggy around Lake Hanson.

Have your first extended break at Twisted Lakes. There are three lakes here, all close together but surprisingly at levels varying up to half a metre. Not far away is Artists Pool with its superb reflections and groves of ancient pencil pines. Throughout this area are stands of fagus which in March or April are a blaze of orange and gold hues.

After another hour or two you'll have arrived at Lake Rodway and the night's destination, Scott-Kilvert Memorial Hut. Named for a teacher and student who perished in a savage November blizzard, the hut sleeps 40 on the upper level of its A-frame structure and there's fresh water just 40 metres away. Because the ground is quite boggy here camping is both discouraged and discouraging.

The next morning continue south on the Lake Rodway Track up over a steep ridge until you join the Overland Track, which takes you back easily and in comfort towards Lake Dove. After an hour's walking, turn right on to the Face Track for almost immediate access to the Cradle Mountain Summit Track. Plan on about two hours return and a steep climb to reach the summit. It's a very good idea to take wet-weather gear and drinking-water at all times.

After this side-trip head east on the Face Track until you spot the signs for Lake Wilks, which makes a perfect locale for an afternoon-tea break. Again the track is very rough and steep going down—allow an hour for just this one kilometre section. You wind up in the late

afternoon at the lovely Ballroom Forest with its gnarled trees and tiny rivulets rushing past mossy rocks. A very easy 45-minute walk later, you'll be back at Lake Dove car-park.

MT RUFUS AND SHADOW LAKE

The World-Heritage-listed wilderness around Lake St Clair offers a surprising variety of stimulating experiences; none is more impressive than the Mt Rufus circuit.

Within its 18 kilometres you'll immerse yourself in a world of alpine tarns and meadows, sandstone outcrops, subalpine pandani communities (looking, as Charles Wooley once wryly noted, like something dinosaurs used to have for lunch) and splendid views across to the headwaters of the Franklin River.

Fuel stoves must be used in this park.

Maps

Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair 1:100 000 Tasmap, *Lake St Clair Day Walk* 1:50 000 Tasmap or *Rufus* 1:25 000 Tasmap. A free note-sheet on the walk is available from the park office.

Access

Very convenient from the car-park at Cynthia Bay next to the lake. Take the Lyell Highway to the park entrance.

The walk

The seven hours return circuit is of a moderate standard but is steep in places. Some sections remain boggy.

Head along the much-travelled Watersmeet Walk—the 'bottom end' of the Overland Track—for just under two kilometres. At Watersmeet turn at the Shadow Lake-Mt Rufus signposted track junction and follow it for just over 11 kilometres to the summit.

Along the way is a diversion to Shadow and Forgotten Lakes. It's a very easy jaunt and visiting these lovely tarns is a must. Both are peaceful and quite pristine, with only a camping ground at Shadow Lake to remind you of any human presence. In autumn you'll notice dozens of varieties of colourful fungi as well as the characteristic mountain rockets of Tasmania's high country.

Back on the Mt Rufus track, notice how the rain-forest gullies gradually give way to subalpine stands of snow gums and many fire-scarred trees, the result of a bushfire here in 1981. Major disturbances like fires can have long-lasting effects on vegetation at this altitude.

After passing through a valley of *richia* under the shadow of Mt Hugel, you begin the steep ascent of Mt Rufus. Also along the walk is an area of sandstone sculptured by wind and rain into a myriad of fascinating shapes. These outcrops are almost 300 million years old and once formed a continuous layer across most of Tasmania.

From the 1416 metre summit on a clear day you'll savour views of Frenchmans Cap and Mt Gell to the west and even the Walls of Jerusalem National Park to the north-east. There's a small hut called Gingerbread about two kilometres below Mt Rufus and off the track, in which you can shelter if the weather turns nasty.

As you descend from Mt Rufus you'll have the chance to see many of the plants that have adapted so well to this harsh, often snow-covered environment. Boronias, cushion plants, snow daisies and eye-brights cover the slopes in late spring and throughout the summer, providing delights for your senses of sight and smell.

HARTZ PEAK AND THE ALPINE TARNs

An exposed alpine plateau, there's little at Hartz Mountains National Park that will offer protection from the sudden squalls that race up from the South-west coast and bring with them icy winds and drenching showers. But on a clear, sunlit day, this park provides its visitors with a host of pleasures including stunning views, a series of tiny but pristine glacial lakes and (in December) the garish reds of waratah in bloom.

Maps

Hartz Mountains Day Walks or *Huon* 1:100 000 Tasmap.

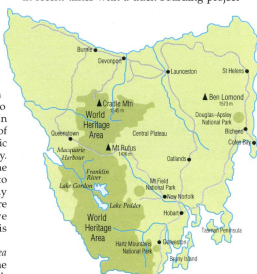
Access

From Geeveston follow the signs up a winding but reasonably graded gravel road to the park entrance, then continue up to a large parking circle with access to all the tracks of the upper park.

The walk

The walk to Hartz Peak takes five hours return, retracting your steps. The going is mostly easy but is steep at the summit.

The Parks & Wildlife Service has been busy in recent times with a duck-boarding project



in this park to spare the fragile alpine plant life from the crushing effects of too many boots. As a result, you'll find the beginning of the Hartz Peak walk hardly more challenging than a Sunday stroll in the Domain.

But the scenery makes this walk worth while. This is Tasmania's high country at its best, even more attractive than the State's other 'roof', the Central Plateau. That's because around you are the South-west mountain ranges and shadowing your entire walk is the looming presence of the Devils

Backbone, a steep dolerite ridge of impressive grandeur.

The other very special aspect of this walk is its tarns. Ladies Tarn and Esperance Tarn along the lower reaches of the track are both ideal for relaxed contemplation.

Leaving Ladies Tarn, the track suddenly steepens and climbs towards a second plateau. From there it's about an hour to the top, an exertion rewarded by unsurpassed views of the mightiest peaks of the South-west National Park, colossi like Federation Peak, Mt Bobs, and even Frenchmans Cap on a good day. There are perhaps only two or three other locales in Tasmania where such breathtaking views can be yours after less than three hours of mostly unchallenging walking.

The return journey retraces your steps, with differing views of nearby Mt Snowy and the tarns below you.

TARN SHELF AND LAKE WEBSTER, MT FIELD NATIONAL PARK

Although Mt Field National Park, just 75 minutes from Hobart, is Tasmania's most frequently visited National Park, very few of its visitors ever get much past Russell Falls. This is a mistake for the masses but great for walkers who yearn for an alpine experience without the crowds. And although this is a superb day walk at any time of the year, it is most spectacular in autumn when the fagus changes from deep green to burnt gold. Plan on spending a full day walking a loop that will reveal for you the glacial landscapes and alpine environment of Mt Field at their finest.

Maps

Mt Field 1:50 000 Tasmap.

Access

There is a bitumen road from Hobart through New Norfolk to the park entrance. From there drive 16 kilometres up the gravel Lake Dobson Road and park at the road's end.

The walk

This moderately graded walk takes five-six hours return.

From the Lake Dobson car-park, walk up the Urquhart Track and past the ski tows heading for the Rodway Ranges. Along the way is a look-out with superb views of Lake Seal and Platypus Tarn, your destination at the walk's end. Both lakes were scoured out by massive glacial ice and very steep cliffs—especially at the head of the valley below—are the result.

Tarn Shelf is a highlight in itself. Ancient pencil pines and pandani line your walk and with a variety of small lakes to choose from, you'll have no shortage of idyllic spots for a snack break.

At Lake Newdegate turn right towards Twisted Tarn and descend to Twilight Tarn. The latter has a hut and an indoor display of old skiing memorabilia.

As you descend again the eucalypt forest becomes denser towards the bridge over Broad River. Here you'll discover Lake Webster and its surrounding button-grass

plain. It's just 500 metres to the turn-off due south that will eventually lead you to Lake Seal and Platypus Tarn.

Like so many of the glaciated lakes here, Lake Seal is long and finger-shaped. The much smaller Platypus Tarn is accessible by a small but quite worthwhile side-track. In all, it offers a different perspective and more great views of the park's subalpine environment.

Following the track south again will ultimately bring you back to the road and a short walk downhill to the Lake Dobson car-park.

LEABERRA TRACK

As the local district ranger, Geoff Coles, put it not so long ago, 'this walk has the potential to rival the Overland Track some day, because it's an all-seasons route and it offers such a variety of experiences'.

Situated on the drier east coast of the State, this walk traverses the eucalypt forests of Douglas-Apsley National Park from north to south. To prevent the spread of root-rot fungus, walking the other way is strongly discouraged.

Map

Douglas-Apsley National Park 1:50 000 Tasmap.

Access

Drive 24 kilometres north from Bicheno, ignoring the park entry sign three kilometres north of the town. Turn left (west) just after crossing Stonyford Creek on to the E Road. Follow the signs for seven kilometres to the car-park at Thompsons Marshes. The last two kilometres are fairly rough, so you may need a vehicle with high clearance.

The walk

This varied walk of 28 kilometres is moderate to difficult and requires about two-and-a-half days to complete.

The first two or three hours are fairly gentle walking with only some boggy sections to contend with. After a slight climb you're confronted with a choice—go left along the Rain-forest Ledge or stay on the main track to the campsite just above Heritage Falls. Since you won't want to miss the marvellous views and wet relict forest along the ledge, take the side-track, then follow it back round to the campsite.

Getting to Heritage and Leaberra Falls isn't especially easy—a fair bit of rock-hopping is required. But on a mild day (common in these parts) you'll find that the natural swimming-pools are irresistible. Camp at the campsite.

The next morning fill your water-bottles as there's no reliable water available all day.

Nicholls Needle in the Douglas-Apsley region: a truly elusive Tasmanian peak? Geoff Law

Press on south (retracing your steps for a time) to Look-out Hill, from where you'll take in some sweeping views of the Tasman Sea. It's not far from here to Nicholls Cap and Nicholls Needle, an especially memorable formation of rock jutting haphazardly into the sky.

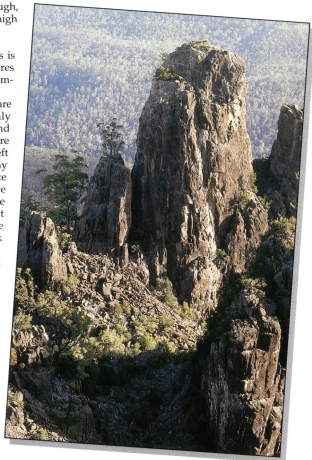
The journey's most challenging moments come next as you brave the steep descent along an overgrown and scrubby track to the Douglas River Crossing. Rest up afterwards and camp on the southern bank of the river.

You find yourself climbing again and joining an old exploration road as you move south towards a ridge and the Denison Marshes. From here it's a very pleasant walk through the State's largest stand of dry sclerophyll forest to the Apsley Waterhole. Here you can take a side-track to Apsley Gorge, a deep canyon of the Apsley River filled with massive boulders.

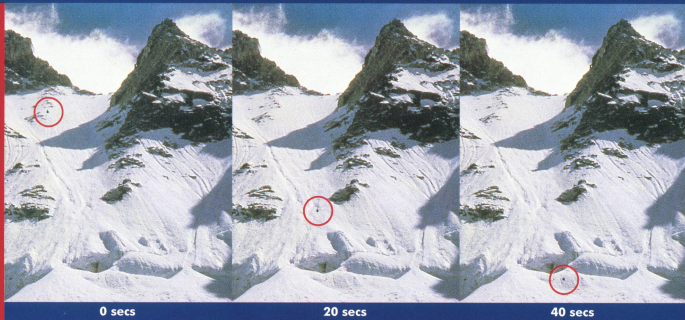
A very attractive, shorter option is to do the Rain-forest Ledge and Heritage Falls circuit, returning to your car after walking for about eight hours. Carry water on the Rain-forest Ledge section and plan on staying overnight fully to appreciate the park's features without having to hurry.

Rangers especially request that you thoroughly clean your boots, tent-pegs and other gear before walking or camping here. Phytophthora root rot is killing off vast tracts of native vegetation in the north-east and your co-operation in slowing its spread will be greatly appreciated. ■

Steve Robertson is a photo-journalist for Tasmania's Parks & Wildlife Service. A keen bushwalker with gimpy knees, he has photographed National Parks around the world, including in Western Australia (where he lived for eight years), Malaysia, the USA and his native Canada.



Chris Bonington demonstrating why we use the toughest fabrics on our rucsacs.



0 secs

20 secs

40 secs

In the late summer of 1992, a group of British climbers celebrated the first ascent of Panch Chuli 5, one of the most beautiful, yet challenging, mountains in the Himalayas.

On the way down, the snow collapsed under Chris Bonington's feet and he cartwheeled out of control into nothingness.

Falling more quickly than he ever thought possible (a sensation he compared to being spun round in a giant washing-machine), he landed 500 feet below.

After struggling to his feet, he was amazed (and relieved) to find he hadn't broken any bones. He was just as surprised to discover that his Berghaus rucsac hadn't

suffered any damage either. We weren't.

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seams are reinforced with double stitching.

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Berghaus equipment is available at all good outdoor equipment stores. Please telephone (02) 438 2266 now for your nearest stockist.



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Never Weather Beaten

RUCKSACKS

John Chapman checks 'em out

Internal frame rucksacks have evolved over the years to become a stable and trusted component of outdoor activities. It is now fair to say that there are really no dud designs or quality problems among any of the major manufacturers. Undoubtedly some suppliers will dispute this as there are some minor differences in design; but none of the models surveyed here will simply fall apart in normal use. A decision which rucksack to choose is now based more on preferences in details than on reputation for quality.

The purpose of this survey is to assist you in choosing a suitable rucksack for your use. Rather than include every possible version that is manufactured, it has been limited to the main models from most of the major manufacturers. All models examined were

Cro-Magnon man swinging in to have his rucksack assessed? Both photos David Carmichael

Points to watch

Size

Ensure that it's large enough for the longest trip you regularly take.

Comfort

A rucksack doesn't have to be uncomfortable. Don't compromise on fit and try it on with a reasonable test load.

Webbing and buckles

From experience a webbing and buckle combination that slides easily in the shop will start slipping once the tape begins to wear. When new it should be possible to tighten up tapes but do expect them to hold firmly.

Flaps over zips

If a zip is at all visible, wind-driven rain and snow will leak through it. A problem with a generous flap cover is that the zip can be harder to manipulate (the flap gets in the way) but most prefer to have dry gear instead of really easy access.

Extendible lid

If you intend to do any trips on which you might need to carry more gear than is normal buy a model with an extendible lid which gives more space inside. This is far better than tying gear to the outside where it gets damaged or lost.

Throat

Ensure that the throat is long enough to keep your gear dry when the rucksack is extended to full height. Some rucksacks have no throat or just a very short one. ■



This survey summarises the findings of the writer, who was selected for the task because of, among other things, his knowledge of the subject and his impartiality. The survey was checked and verified by Glenn Tempest, and reviewed by at least three of *Wild's* editorial staff. Despite such efforts to achieve accuracy and impartiality, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.



MAIN RANGE



LAKE TAHUNE



FEDERATION PEAK

Available in Men's and Women's sizings.

PROUDLY AUSTRALIAN MADE

These rucksacks are designed and manufactured in Australia using Australia's finest pack canvas.

RELIABLE

Triple stitched main seams, stress areas are reinforced and heavy wear areas are overlaid with Cordura®.

FUNCTIONAL

All features exist for a reason. Easily accessible useful sized pockets and the extendible hood are just two of our unique features.

COMFORTABLE

This range of rucksacks feature our Wedgetail Harness System. With two shoulder strap choices and a luxuriously comfortable hip belt.

MOUNTAIN DESIGNS



Melbourne 377 Little Bourke St. 03-9670 3354 • **Sydney** 499 Kent St. 02 - 267 3822 • **Perth** 862 Hay St. 09 - 3224774 • **Canberra** 7 Lonsdale St. Braddon 06 - 247 7488 • **Cottesloe** 31 Jarrad St. 09 - 385 1689 • **Brisbane** 105 Albert St. 07- 3221 6756 • **Katoomba** 190 Katoomba St. 047-82 5999 • **Hawthorn** 654 Glenferrie Rd. 03-9818 1544 • **Fortitude Valley** 146 Wickham St. 07-3216 1866 and 224 Barry Pde. 07-3216 0462 • **Adelaide** 203 Rundle St. 08-232 0690 • **Parramatta** 310 Church St. 02- 893 7100 • **Morwell** 18 Tarwin St. 051-343 411

on sale at the time of the survey so none of them are samples. Not every model has been included as there is a mind-boggling range available. (Other well-known pack manufacturers include Caribee, Outgear and Patagonia—their packs were not available for assessment at the time the survey was conducted.) Many of those left out are very similar to those surveyed here and as a rule are equally good.

Many of us carry rucksacks and we all subject them to a certain amount of abuse. We expect them to stay in the rain for hours yet

remain dry, be indestructible when handled by airlines and tossed on to the luggage racks of buses, and survive abrasion from scrub and rocks. It really is a tribute to the manufacturers that rucksacks almost invariably pass these tests with flying colours. Considering that rucksacks usually outlast most other major outdoor gear items—such as boots, tents and clothing—the price you pay for a good one is a very worthwhile investment.

One of the main criteria in your decision should be: for what do you intend to use the

rucksack? The most common mistake I have seen people make is that they buy a rucksack that is simply too small on the basis that it will stop them from loading themselves down with unnecessary gear. What happens in reality is that the necessary gear does not fit inside the rucksack and they have to tie gear to the outside; I know some walkers who do this every weekend! This is untidy and defeats the purpose of using that superbly made rucksack which can protect your gear from the elements. The other major problem of tying gear on is pollution; I continually

Wild Gear Survey Rucksacks

	Volume, litres	Harness			Wright, grams	Compartments	Pockets	Ease of access	Potential waterproofness	Suitability for travel	Suitability for			Approx price, \$
		Main material	Sizes	Type							Weekend trips	Seven-day trips	Extended trips	
Aiking Australia														
McMillan	65-75	Canvas	Two	A	2500	One	Two	●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●●●	●●	430
Stroblecki	65-75	Canvas	Two	A	2750	Two	Two	●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●●●	●●	460
Bass	65-75	Canvas	Two	A	3250	Two	Two	●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	530
Berghaus Korea/New Zealand														
Pulsar	65	Text nylon	One	F	2100	One	One	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●	●	200
Alp	60-80	As above	Four	F	1900	One	One	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	330
Tyger	70-90	As above	Three	F	2100	One	Two	●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●●	●●●	350
Horizon	80-90	Canvas	Three	F	2400	One	Two	●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●●	●●●	360
Fairlydown New Zealand														
Mistral	70	Canvas	One	A	2500	Two	Four	●●●●	●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●	430
Terra Nova	70-75	Canvas	Two	A	2400	One	One	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	430
Endavour	75-80	Canvas	Two	A	2600	Two	Three	●●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●●	●●	450
Phoenix	85-90	Canvas	Two	A	2800	Two	Five	●●●●	●●	●●	●	●●●	●●●●	470
Katmandu Korea														
Talis	65-75	Text nylon	Two	A	2300	Two	Two	●●	●●	●●	●●●●	●●●	●	200
Alpaca	65-75	Canvas	Two	A	2600	Two	Two	●●	●●	●●	●●●●	●●●	●	300
Lowie UK														
Alpamayo	55-80	Text nylon	Three	A	2500	One	Two	●●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●	●●●	420
Macpac New Zealand														
Torre	80-85	Canvas	Two	A	2400	One	One	●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●●	●●●	420
Cascade	85-90	Canvas	Two	A	2600	Two	Two	●●	●●	●●	●	●●	●●●●	460
Mountain Designs Australia														
Federation Peak	70	Canvas	Two	A	2800	One	Three	●●●	●●●●	●●	●●	●●●●	●●	420
Lake Tahune	60-70	Canvas	Two	A	2600	Two	Three	●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●	440
Main Range	65-70	Canvas	Two	A	3000	Two	Four	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●	●●●●	●●	450
Endavour	75	Canvas	Two	A	3700	Two	Four	●●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●	550
Summit Australia														
Cross Country	55-65	Canvas	One	A	2200	One	Three	●●●	●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●	250
Kimberley	75-85	Canvas	One	A	2300	One	Three	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	●●●●	●●●	360
Expedition	75-85	Canvas	One	A	2400	Two	Three	●●●	●●●	●●	●●	●●●●	●●●	390
Summit Gear Australia														
Blue Gum	60	Canvas	One	F	1700	One	Two	●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●	180
Picoaso	70	Text nylon	One	A	2400	Two	Two	●●●	●●	●●●	●	●●●	●●●●	375
Tatanka Vietnam														
Spire Rock	50-70	Text nylon	Three	A	2600	Two	One	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●	250
Tika New Zealand														
Aspiring	60-65	Canvas	Two	A	na	Two	One	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●●●	●	●	300
Cupola	70-75	Canvas	Two	A	na	Two	Two	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●●●	●	●	330
Explorer	80-90	Canvas	Two	A	na	One	Two	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●	400
Cardona	85	Canvas	Two	A	3200	Two	Three	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●	490
Wilderness Equipment Australia														
Alpine	75-90	Canvas	na	F	na	One	One	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	●	●●●●	●●●	400
Expedition I	85-100	Canvas	Four	F	2500	One	Two	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	●	●●●	●●●●	400
Expedition II	80	Canvas	Four	F	2700	One	Two	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	●	●●●	●●●	430
● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent A adjustable F fixed na information not available text nylon textured nylon														

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent A adjustable F fixed na information not available text nylon textured nylon

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keep collecting torn plastic and shredded foam mats along bush tracks. All these problems are easily solved by selecting a rucksack which is just large enough (at a squeeze) for your longest trip. On shorter trips everything should fit comfortably inside.

The claimed **volume** given is that quoted in catalogues and promotional material. Years ago capacity between similar designs but different brands varied widely but with the current sophistication of the marketplace sizes now seem reasonably accurate.

The **main material** shown as 'canvas' is today a blend of cotton and synthetic. Cordura is a heavy-weave nylon cloth with a protective waterproof coating; virtually all 'canvas' rucksacks use Cordura as well so the accompanying table simply shows the material which makes up the bulk of the rucksack.

Many of the rucksack **harnesses** available today have similar features. The least common is the fixed type; manufacturers make several sizes for different people. The advantage of this style of harness is that if it fits well you have a simpler harness and thus carry less weight in excess tape. However, if it doesn't fit that's tough.

The other main harness design is an adjustable system. These systems vary greatly and while adjustments are possible in some areas, in other parts of the harness the size is fixed. This may not be immediately obvious but explains why some rucksacks do not fit some people even though they would appear to be infinitely adjustable. The best test has always been to load a rucksack with a weight similar to that which you intend to carry. A ten-minute walk around a shop will not usually tell you whether it's the best fit but will help to eliminate the ones that are uncomfortable for you. Many of the adjustable models also offer a

range of sizes to confuse the customer even more. The good news for women is that some models now have been specially designed for them.

The **number of pockets** indicates major pockets only.

The **ease-of-access** rating in the table is based on how easy it is to open the main compartments and zippers. Stiffer zips, sharp corners, an excessively long throat—which makes access to the bag harder—all decrease this rating. In fact the most waterproof rucksacks will often have the poorest access,

the rucksack to be totally full, which some would consider to be actually slightly overloaded. That happens on real trips and seemingly when the rain is heaviest. And that is when the rucksack is most likely to leak.

The ratings for this category have been influenced by design features that could cause problems—features such as ledges where water could sit (common on throats and above some pockets) and pole-sleeves which do not have outlet holes. Also taken into consideration are such things as the presence and tightness of flaps covering zips.

A low rating in this category does not signify that the rucksack leaks; merely that it has some features which I consider to be more likely to result in leakage than other, similar, rucksacks have.

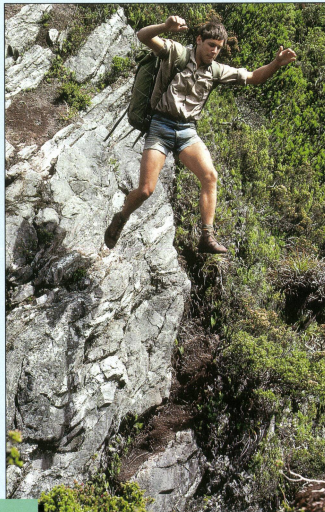
An often overlooked aspect of rucksacks is how well they **travel** when in someone else's care. Airlines and bus companies are infamous for destroying rucksacks. The real problem are those dangling tapes and buckles that jam in machinery. The only safe thing to do is to tie them up so that they no longer dangle. Then at the other end you spend ten minutes or so untying all the knots. A higher rating has been given to rucksacks with fewer dangling tapes and with guides for the main flap straps as these will take less time to prepare for travel and also be less likely to be damaged in transit. One current design has a travel pack flap over the main harness and thus rates highly in this category.

The ratings for **weekend, seven-day and extended** use are based on my experience in the wetter States and should give you some idea of what each rucksack does best. When you take different gear and in some environments—such as the tropics and deserts—less 'group' gear is required, a smaller rucksack can be used on longer trips. The rating is based on fitting everything inside the rucksack. 'Extended use' is considered to be a trip of 14 days or longer. In reality rucksacks that can fit all gear inside for two

weeks are rare. I have one but it was custom-made to order. If you need a special rucksack that is not available off the shelf some of the Australian and New Zealand manufacturers can do 'specials'. Just remember that this takes some time and will cost significantly more.

Modern rucksacks are amazingly good to carry when compared to their ancestors of 20 years ago. Today you can confidently expect to find a comfortable rucksack and should enjoy many years of use from it. As it does last a long time it's worth putting in some time to select a rucksack that works for you. ■

John Chapman (see Contributors in *Wild no 1*) is among Australia's most travelled and widely respected bushwalking writers. He is particularly well known for his books of Tasmanian track notes.



The survey of rocket packs appears in a future issue.

which proves that rucksack design is a compromise between many conflicting needs.

Regarding **potential waterproofness** it would be great to take every rucksack out and test it in the rain. However, that isn't practical; how would you ensure that each one received the same test? Most new rucksacks are essentially waterproof; the important thing is to determine which models will remain so after extensive use. Rather than test the 'as-new' waterproofness of each rucksack I have given a rating based on design features such as seams, the throat design and the pocket closures supported by what I have seen lack in the bush. For this rating I have considered

Handy hints

Looking after your rucksack

- 1 Dry it after every trip or whenever you can. Put it in a dry, well-ventilated place—do not use artificial heat.
- 2 Inspect it often. Look at major stress points regularly and fix any problems before they become disasters in the field. All rucksacks rely on stitching and over time the thread can wear out.
- 3 Remember to tie all straps up when entrusting your rucksack to transport services. They appreciate it and you will too as the risk of damage to your valuable goods decreases. ■

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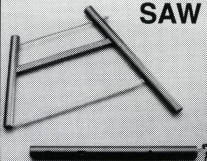
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HEADLAMPS

Guided by the light—a *Wild* survey

Whether for an early-morning alpine start, cooking at night, pitching your tent in the dark, rogaining in the dead of night or changing a flat tyre in the dark, you can't help but appreciate the benefits of hands-free light during your outdoor activities.

Forget your notions of mining lights with batteries and headpieces that are large, cumbersome and difficult to maintain, and forget your fears of looking like Cyclops reincarnate. The headtorches reviewed in this survey will never be fashion statements, but they are close to the most practical pieces of gear you can take with you to the outdoors. My headtorch stays in the boot of the car for every eventuality.

The headlamps surveyed here are those which were available in retail shops in August and September 1995, with the exception of the Petzl Duo which should be in the shops before Christmas.

Most headlamps are supplied with a spare globe. Many operate on both a standard and a brighter (often halogen) globe. Halogen globes are expensive (around \$10) but they typically last three or more times longer than standard globes. They will, however, halve the life of your battery. It is generally best to run your headlamp on the globe supplied and recommended by the manufacturer though you can often find substitutes.

None of the lights surveyed are supplied with batteries. You will get better perform-

Vera Wong throws some light on the subject of headlamps in Tasmania's Niggly Cave. *Rolan Eberhard*

Handy hints

- 1 Never store batteries in your headlamp when you are not using it.
- 2 Avoid touching halogen globes with your fingers. This can often result in the globe blowing. Use a tissue or soft cloth.
- 3 Despite any claim to water repellency, always thoroughly dry your headlamp after you have used it in wet conditions. If you have used it around salt-water, rinse it out in fresh water and dry it completely.
- 4 O-rings can be sensitive—ask NASA—so use silicone-based lubricants and always load them with an even pressure to avoid squashing the O-ring in one direction.
- 5 Please always dispose of batteries correctly.
- 6 Manufacturers' bulbs and battery recommendations are best but you can sometimes find alternatives—especially rechargeable batteries. ■



This survey summarises the findings of the writer, who was selected for the task because of, among other things, his knowledge of the subject and his impartiality. The survey was checked and verified by John Chapman, and reviewed by at least three of *Wild's* editorial staff. Despite such efforts to achieve accuracy and impartiality, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

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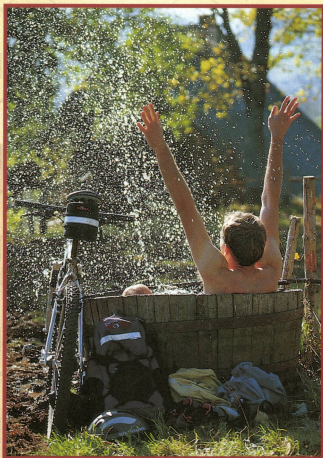
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Wild Equipment Survey Headlamps

Globe	Batteries: number, type	Distance, metres	Running time	Variable focus	Weight, grams	Ease of use	Suitability for					Value	Approx price, \$
							Bushwalking	Caving	Mountaineering	Travel	Water sports		
Coghlan's SE Asia Headlamp	Standard	2, AA	4	3 h 55 min	N	105	●●●●	●●	●	nr	●●●	nr	15
Lago France	Standard	4, AA	16	5 h 30 min	Y	145	●●	●●	●●	●	●●	nr	80
Petzl France													
Micro	Standard	2, AA	7	4 h 25 min	Y	106	●●●●	●●	●	●	●●●●	nr	43
	Halogen	2, AA	28	45 min	Y	106	●●●●	●●	●	●	●●●●	nr	7
Zoom	Standard	3, AA (or 4 4.5 volt)	25	8 h 25 min (or 17 h 45 min)	Y	172	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	nr	65
	Halogen	As above	65 (or 75)	3 h 55 min (or 7 h 30 min)	Y	172	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	nr	7
Mega	Standard	3, C (or 3, AA)	30	31 h 10 min (or 15 h 25 min)	Y	238	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●	●	nr	80
	Halogen	As above	80	12 h 20 min (or 3 h 10 min)	Y	238	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●	●	nr	7
Arctic	Halogen	3, AA (or 4 4.5 volt)	65 (or 75)	3 h 55 min (or 7 h 30 min)	Y	180	●●●●	●●	●●	●●●●	●	nr	86
Duo	Standard	4, AA	22	11 h 45 min	Y	198	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	nr	115
	Halogen	4, AA	80	3 h 25 min	Y	198	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●●●	●	nr	7
Resource Enterprises USA													
Headlite HL-4AA	Standard	4, AA	25	9 h 20 min	Y	172	●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	nr	nr	40
Headlite HL-4D	Standard	6, D*	25	14 h 9 min	Y	309	●●●●	●	●●●●	●	nr	nr	40
Headlite II WH-4AA	Standard	4, AA	30	9 h 28 min	Y	220	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	nr	nr	75

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent nr not recommended * Battery pack mounted on waist or back. All others have head-mounted batteries † Halogen globes are bought as an 'extra'

ance from alkaline than from other standard batteries. Lithium batteries are expensive but have a shelf life of about ten years and work very well in extreme cold. Most environmentally friendly are rechargeable batteries. Some of the models surveyed have rechargeable batteries available as an option. While the initial investment may make you cringe, and your bank manager rub his hands together, Petzl claims that its rechargeable battery will save you around \$2000—and space in a land-fill. In cold conditions it is crucial to keep your batteries warm to maintain their performance.

The 4.5 volt battery for the Petzl Zoom is a flat battery made by Duracell which is available from most outdoor shops.

Running times were calculated using a light sensor attached to a stop-watch. In each case, alkaline batteries were used in the tests. Each headlamp was turned on and left running until the light reached a level at which I was unable to read comfortably at a distance of two metres from the headlamp. Note that there will always be some variation in the discharge times of batteries so treat these results as approximate. Intermittent use of your light will prolong battery life.

The distance refers to that at which the light is effective, measured as the distance from the headlamp at which I could read at night. This often meant focusing the light—when that was possible. To be able to focus the beam is an advantage in many situations.

Provided that your expectations are appropriate, and you treat your light properly (see

Handy hints) each of the lights surveyed is suitable for a wide range of uses.

The value column is a subjective attempt to evaluate a range of factors including durability, comfort, ease of use, suitability for endurance and value for money relative to the other lamps surveyed.

Andrew Bell

RUCKSACKS

A steady flow

Nothing seems to be holding back the flood of new rucksacks that appear on the market each season. Prolific in rucksack manufacture in recent years has been Andrew King, and his Australian-made *Aiking* rucksacks. The latest two are of a large day-pack size (around 40 litres) and are similar in shape. The *GP Euclid*

is front loading (like a travel pack) and includes a large front pocket, while the *GP Hi-lift* is top loading. Both packs feature compression-straps, and other straps to hold various knick-knacks. RRP \$169 for each rucksack.

Macpac's new lightweight fabric *Aztec SL* has been used in two of its latest rucksacks. With its array of loops, holsters and tubes (for items such as ice-tools, shovels and ropes) the *Rocketeer* is ideal for serious mountaineers. It also has a removable foam back-pad (handy as a seat in the snow) and a special sleeve to accommodate an Oasis fluid container (see review under 'Miscellaneous'). RRP \$249. Designed to suit women climbers, the 65 litre *Serac* features: Macpac's Women's Active harness; a single compartment with a 15 litre lid extension; ice-axe, crampon, ski, snow-stake and gear-rack attachment points; and a large lid pocket. RRP \$349.

Just about every rucksack we've seen recently claims to provide free movement of air for better circulation. Who knows, maybe the *Salewa Puterley 40 AMS*, distributed by *Intertek*, can do it effectively! The pack uses the new Air Mat System (AMS) which utilises a multipore cavity at the back to provide ventilation. According to the manufacturer, the 10 millimetre thick airmat won't compress under pressure, thus the pores remain effective. Major features of the *Puterley 40 AMS* include a number of attachment points for equipment, a removable mat, two pockets on the lid, and a water-bottle pouch. RRP \$159.

SLEEPING-BAGS

Bagging the women

One Planet, renowned manufacturer of sleeping-bags for some time, has added to its selection the *Eos*, a bag designed to suit a woman's shape and metabolism. We're not sure how this bag was researched but its length (slightly shorter than is traditional)



Left, the label tells you all you need to know. Below, ditto, except for the model (*GP Euclid*).



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I distinctly remember thinking "Finally, something my mother can't possibly find fault with. A nice, simple pair of lightweight shorts. They don't even have a fly, for heaven's sake." Wrong. First she tore into the waistband. "It needs a dash of color—put in a belt," she barked. Then the inseam. "It's as obvious as the nose on your face. Add 1/4 inch." Then she had us zip the back pocket. And make the shorts bigger and blousier. Use double pleats instead of single. She even challenged the very fabric of the shorts. "We came up with Perfecta Cloth™ to be the most comfortable and durable nylon around. Now use it!"

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and new shape are claimed to leave fewer cold spots for greater warmth. The Eos has a fill weight of 700 grams of down, a total weight of 1450 grams, and is covered with a waterproof DryLoft shell. RRP \$649.

The *Annapurna* and *Azure* are the latest women's bags from Macpac. While both have a fill weight of 700 grams, the mummy-shaped *Annapurna* uses 100 per cent down (and extra down at the foot for greater warmth) and has a waterproof Reflex shell. The *Azure* is a semi-rectangular bag filled with 90/10 down, has a taffeta shell and features extra down at the foot. The foot section also has a waterproof Reflex shell. RRP \$599 and \$429, respectively. For those colder than usual nights, why not try a Macpac *Snowflake*, a light (550 grams), down-filled bag that slips easily inside your existing sleeping-bag to increase its warmth considerably. RRP \$179. And if you're a full-blown gear freak, why not arm yourself with another Macpac item, the *Overture*. No, it's not a Vivaldi CD. In fact, it is a 200 gram, waterproof/breathable sleeping-bag cover made of Reflex. It will upgrade your existing non-waterproof bag to protect you from dampness, particularly that of condensation and dew. It is not a bivvy-bag but could be quite suitable for use in damp huts and tents, or outside when the weather is fine. RRP \$149.

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR

Keep your shirt on

While it may look like a traditional flannelette shirt, the *Cross-Terrain Shirt* from New Zealand manufacturer *Wilderness* is made from quick-drying polyester and polyester fleece. As a result, it feels extremely

comfortable against the skin and is better able to keep the wearer warmer and dryer than a conventional shirt. It sells for \$139 and is widely available.

Trekking in

A year ago *Timberland* entered the bushwalking market with its Eurohiker boots. More recently it began to produce its own sandals with the release of the *Timberland Mountain Trekker* (TMT). While more fashionable than the usual 'sport' sandals, the TMT incorporates the sole grip of its walking boots with an upper of leather and neoprene. While not available at outdoor shops, the sandals can be obtained from *Timberland* and other large retail shops. RRP \$225.



Timberland Mountain Trekker sport sandal. Top, Domke OutPack, for photographers with the lot.

MISCELLANEOUS

Picture this

Dombrovskis, Rankin, eat your heart out. With the aid of a *Domke OutPack camera bag* we can all look like professional 'outdoor' photographers. There are two models.

The *Photo Backpack* will hold virtually all items of camera gear you're ever likely to need, but its large size makes it really only suitable for day trips. Hence you'll probably want to leave your rucksack at home. The bag uses a harness system not unlike that of a conventional rucksack, but it's inside where all the action takes place. There are numerous padded compartments that can be moved to suit your gear, and the bag is designed so that you can reach only the gear you need while not exposing your other gear to any hazards. Other features include a pack cover and carry handles. Regardless of the price (RRP \$610) up-and-coming photographers will no doubt wish to check this out. Probably of more practical use for a bushwalker or cross-country skier is the *Waist Pack*, a top-loading 'bum-bag'-type bag with a main compartment which is divided by two adjustable panels. It also includes an external zip-pouch, two small pockets and a removable water-bottle harness. RRP \$125. Both bags are distributed through major photographic retailers.

Settling in

A new brand of *lightweight food* has muscled in on the better-known brands in recent months. *Settlers* dried beef foods, produced in Australia by *Trizone Pacific*, are claimed to take only a little over ten minutes to cook and can then be added to various other preparations to make lasagna, bolognese sauce and the like. Each unopened packet has a 'shelf life' of 15 months. Available in your local outdoor shop.

Surveying the universe

At only RRP \$599 and weighing a mere 283 grams, the *Magellan 2000* is possibly the cheapest and lightest *GPS receiver* we've seen. With a capacity of 100 way-points, and quite small in size, it is well suited to all rucksack-sports enthusiasts. It is available in major camping shops and, in particular, marine retailers.

Health kits for travellers

For the average person travelling, particularly in overseas countries, it is important to guard against illnesses such as gastro, malaria, dehydration, sunburn, STDs and other infections. The *TravelCare Medical Kit* contains virtually everything you'll need to stay healthy and also includes a handy reference guide, *The Pocket Medical Guide for Travellers*. For use by 'medical personnel in developing countries', as the sales blurb says, is the *TravelGard Emergency Kit*, a kit containing a range of sterile items such as syringes, needles and gloves. It is claimed that it has

TRIX

Camera bag-rucksack attachment

How to have your camera always at the ready, by Michael Hesse

So you've got your snazzy camera with the huge zoom hanging off it like a family-sized Coke bottle. You've got your very smart Cordura holster there to put it in. But how do you carry it? Put it in your pack and the hassle of getting it out again will ensure that you return with an unexposed roll of film. Hang it round your neck and it will swing into every rock face you scramble over, dragging an S-bend into your neck in the process. Sling the holster from your belt or pack waist-belt and it will bang into your thighs like a sawn-off cannon. But...there are better ways and I discovered one of them while walking in the Flinders Ranges. First find a scrap of old fencing wire. Wiggle and snap it into two 15 centimetre lengths. Smooth off the jagged ends



using a rock. Shape the wires into a couple of hooks (see diagram) and fasten them to the top of your holster. Put your pack on and slip the hooks you have created through the chest-strap loops on your pack shoulder-straps. The camera will now sit quietly on your chest at the height you desire, with the weight taken by your pack harness. Your chest-strap can be fastened over the camera to clamp it against you when scrambling or running. The holster can be left open and, with the camera strap loosely round your neck, you are ready for instant action the second your companion falls off that log. Happy snapping! ■

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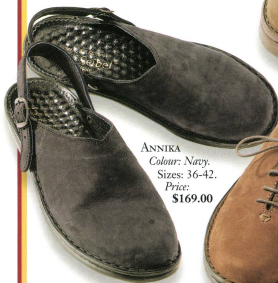
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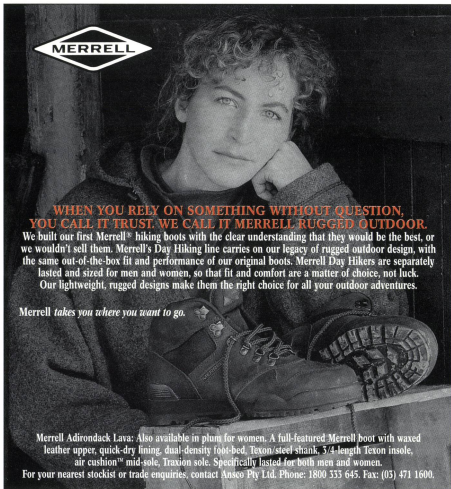
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been developed with advice from travel medicine experts with the increase in hepatitis and HIV in mind, and also includes the above-mentioned reference guide. Both items are neatly and securely packaged and would be extremely worthwhile for anyone planning an overseas trip. The kits have been packed by *Paker Laboratories* and both have been approved by the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration. RRP \$39.95 each kit. Phone Paker Laboratories on (03) 9532 9877.

And another type of kit

WL Gore, the maker of *Gore-Tex* fabric, has developed the *Gore-Tex Repair Kit* for medium-weight garments. To call it a kit is a bit of a misnomer as it consists only of four Gore-Tex patches of various shapes, but if you damage a garment or sleeping-bag made from either Gore-Tex or DryLoft fabric while out in the wilds, this may be just what you'll need. Application of the patches is quick and easy and the item can be used immediately afterwards although the adhesive takes around 24 hours to strengthen completely. Distributed by *Outdoor Agencies*, it is widely available. RRP \$19.95.

Soft old bags

Many walkers would be familiar with those red *Outdoor Research* first aid kits. *Outdoor Research* also produces a number of *padded cases* in various sizes designed to house fragile and odd-shaped objects (such as stoves). The smallest of the six available is about 15 centimetres square and 10 centimetres deep, and each size comes in a different colour. Prices start from around \$23, and they are distributed through outdoor shops.

Water on the run

Have you ever plodded along with a huge thirst but have not bothered to stop because of the hassle of removing your rucksack to reach your water-bottle? With the aid of the *Macpac Oasis* you may hardly have to rest again. This 3.2 litre soft *fluid container* has a tube so that you can suck the water while the container is stored in your rucksack's top pocket. Alternatively, the container can be attached to the outside of your rucksack. Available from a large number of outdoor shops it sells for RRP \$49.95.

Stalking the prey

You'll soon be moving through the bush with the ease and grace of a wild animal—or at least you should—with the aid of the latest shoes from *Adidas*. The *Equipment Adventure Claw* and *Equipment Claw Sandal* are two forms of shoes with soles made up of independent rubber pads to simulate an animal's foot—it is claimed that this type of sole provides unrivalled traction on all surfaces. Whereas many sport shoes and sandals are designed for a specific use, these two new offerings are designed for a variety of sports, including bushwalking and mountain running. They sell for RRP \$120 and \$110, respectively. ■

Products (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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THE WAY TO GO

Walks guides coming out of the woodwork

BOOKS

Exploring Namadgi & Tidbinbilla—Day Walks in Canberra's High Country by Graeme Barrow (Dagrraja Press, revised edition 1995, RRP \$12.95).

Residents of the national capital who seek an easy introduction to the hills and mountains which form this city's backdrop may well be drawn to this publication. It details 25 day-walks; the starting-points of most of these walks are not more than 80 kilometres by road from Canberra's city centre. Many are suitable for walkers with minimal experience and most are quite short—more like half-day walks.

Contrasting with the brevity of the walks is the long-windedness of the author's style. This lack of economy is a result of the fact that Mr Barrow, instead of providing an objective set of directions, has in many cases treated the reader to a 'warts and all' account of his own experience of the walk in question. Commentary on the human or natural history of a locality may well make a worthwhile embellishment to a text such as this; but mentioning what the weather was like on the day the author was there or how he felt as he

plodded up some hill or other seems at odds with its main purpose.

For all that, this is an attractively produced book and it contains some information—on the history of huts, hut-sites and ruins—not available elsewhere. Judging by the success of its predecessors it will no doubt find its market niche.

Trevor Lewis

On Track Map Reading and Camping Guide

by Geoffrey Archer and Raymond Williams (Australian Navigation Skills and Accessory Services, 1994, RRP \$29.95).

If you're like me, your compass is relegated to the bottom of the rucksack and rarely sees the light of day. Every time I have to use the thing I spend half an hour trying to remember how it works. As an educational resource it will be hard to beat this 100-page guide to navigation and basic survival techniques. Reading through it made me realise just how little I know about my compass, something this book will no doubt help to rectify.

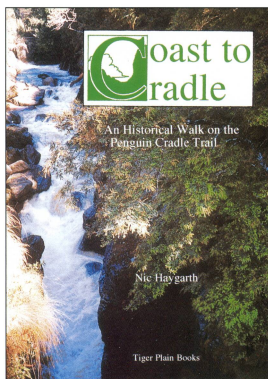
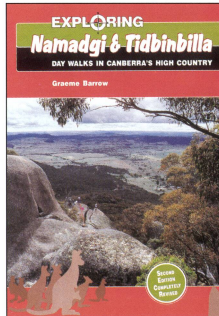
Full marks to the authors who have gone to great lengths to keep the book simple. The chapters are well ordered and start with an introduction to maps before taking the reader through the many aspects of navigation. For the really keen the appendix deals with recent global positioning system (GPS) developments. My only criticism of this book is that the information on camping equipment—and especially clothing—is remarkably outdated. However, this is a minor flaw in an otherwise valuable resource.

Glenn Tempest

Coast to Cradle—An Historical Walk on the Penguin Cradle Trail

by Nic Haygarth (Tiger Plain Books, 1995, RRP \$9.95).

This is an even better effort than the author's other book of walks in this area. It covers the North West Walking Club's track from Penguin to Cradle Mountain and includes plenty of interesting historical notes about the area. It will increase your appreciation of the region. Haygarth has certainly done his research and the book is a good read as well as adding interest to the track. But I found the track notes inadequate



as some essential information is not included; for example, the time it takes to cross Gunns Plains. Therefore those who walk the track should also obtain the walking club's track notes.

John Chapman

Walks and Climbs on Mt Stapylton (Gunigal)

by John Petheram (published by the author, 1995, RRP \$9.95).

A slim A5, black-and-white, laser-printed production, *Walks and Climbs* is an unusual guide to one of the northernmost peaks in Victoria's Grampian Ranges. Unusual because it is essentially a very detailed guide to a small area famous more for its rockclimbing



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than its bushwalking; and unusual because a smattering of descriptions of basic technical rockclimbs is included with the information on the walks. I'm not convinced that the mix is either successful or wise. Despite the usual warnings and disclaimers, bushwalkers need (much) more detailed route information than is contained here for attempting such technical terrain and may find themselves out of their depth. Climbers, on the other hand, would be much better off obtaining a rockclimbing guidebook to the area.

Having said this, *Walks and Climbs* contains useful information. The maps and aerial photos show the latest tracks and walking routes, many of which have been built by the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (which administers the area) and have already led to overcrowding and related problems.

Chris Baxter

Kokoda Trail

by Clive Baker (Australian Military History Publications, 1994, RRP \$20 including postage and packaging from 13 Veronica PL, Loftus, NSW 2232).

The Kokoda Trail offers a unique combination of historical, natural and cultural interest. Clive Baker's guidebook combines these aspects of the track in an easy-to-read form and is an invaluable guide for those preparing to walk it. The guide is structured around a relatively comfortable 11-day trip

as Baker (with a trek leader's grandiosity) puts it, you should definitely get this little book.

David Mossop

North Queensland Wet Tropics— a Guide for Travellers

by Rod Ritchie and others (Rainforest Publishing, 1995, RRP \$24.95).

A guide for the ecotourist (in the true sense of the word) in the wet tropics has long been needed. I particularly liked this guide's background detail on history and biology although this is enticing rather than comprehensive. Unfortunately, as in so many guides to walking tracks, the descriptions of the attractions tend to be pedestrian and the maps are too broad in scale to be used on the

rodents, plus the enigmatic dingo) which inhabit the State at present. A further 14 introduced (feral) species are also described; 9 of these are pests.

The book includes 31 marine mammals (seals and whales), detailed distribution maps, 25 colour plates, an extensive bibliography and a concise index.

Bruce Jones

CALENDARS & DIARIES

Australian Landscape Calendar 1996
(Wilderness Society, RRP \$16.95).

Australian Panoramic Landscapes 1996
(Michael Ryan, RRP \$12.95).

Australian Wildlife Calendar 1996
(Wilderness Society, RRP \$16.95).

Greenpeace—Stepping Lightly on the Earth 1996 Calendar
(Greenpeace, RRP \$22.95).

Tasmanian Wilderness Calendar 1996
(Peter Dombrovskis, RRP \$17.95).

Wild Places of Australia 1996
(Robert Rankin, RRP \$12.95).

Wilderness of Australia 1996
(Robert Rankin, RRP \$12.95).

Wilderness of New South Wales 1996
(Robert Rankin, RRP \$12.95).

Wilderness of Queensland 1996
(Robert Rankin, RRP \$12.95).

Wilderness of Victoria 1996
(Robert Rankin, RRP \$12.95).

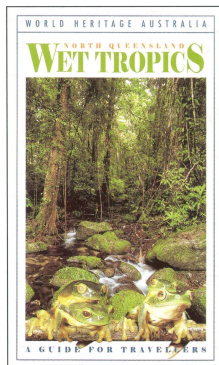
Wilderness Tasmania 1996
(Rob Blakers, RRP \$8.95).

Natural Australia Desk Diary 1996
(Australian Conservation Foundation, RRP \$29.95).

1996 Wilderness Diary
(Peter Dombrovskis, RRP \$22.95).

Wilderness Diary 1996
(Australian Conservation Foundation, RRP \$18.95).

Wilderness of Australia Diary 1996
(Robert Rankin, RRP \$14.95).



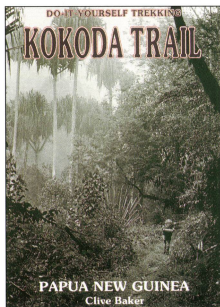
longer walks. Nevertheless the guide is more complete, up to date and sensitive to the environment than anything else available. What it needs to be comprehensive is an account of the mobile treckangaroo spotting platform: the much maligned cable-car from Cairns to Kuranda.

Stephen Garnett

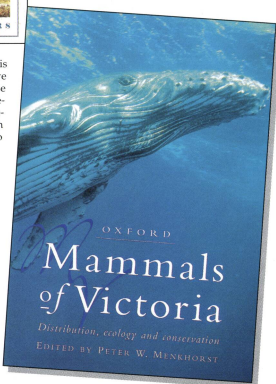
Mammals of Victoria— Distribution, ecology and conservation

edited by Peter Menkhurst (Oxford University Press, 1995, RRP \$59.95).

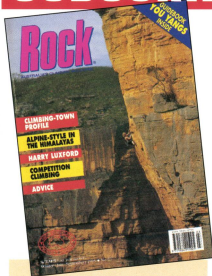
Mammals of Victoria is the modern compendium on this topic and the first for 45 years. Skillfully compiled by Peter Menkhurst and seven other contributors from the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources at Heidelberg, the text describes two native egg-laying monotremes, 38 pouched marsupials and 32 'placental' mammals (22 bats, 9



and provides sketch maps as well as vertical profiles of the route for each day. The description of each day's walk includes notes on aspects of the Kokoda campaign as well as on the flora and fauna. Also included are details of accommodation and transport. Although many will wish to delve more deeply into the historical background of the Kokoda campaign before they walk the track, this guide is an excellent starting-point and provides enough historical detail to enable any walker really to appreciate the nature of the campaign. If you are thinking of embarking on 'the Experience of a Lifetime',



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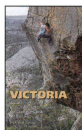


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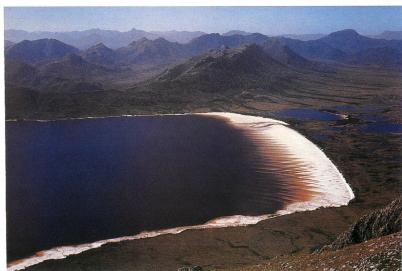
REVIEWS

The only new entry to this year's list of calendars and diaries is *Greenpeace—Stepping Lightly on the Earth 1996*. It includes photographs of overseas scenes, particularly of North America, but Australia is not featured. Text accompanying each spread gives an insight into some environmental problems and how Greenpeace is responding or has responded with action. The photographs are well reproduced and the calendar is printed on oxygen-bleached recycled paper.

Glenn van der Knijff

David Neilson is one of the true craftsmen of Australian wilderness publishing. Not surprisingly, his wonderful photo of (unflooded) Lake Pedder from the Frankland Range is reproduced to near perfection on the heaviest weight paper I can recall seeing for a poster. This giant poster (measuring 690 x 920 millimetres) is a bargain, particularly when you consider that \$1.00 from each sale is donated to Pedder 2000, the campaign to unflood the lake. Buy one.

CB



LAKE PEDDER

MAPS

The High Country—Victoria

(Hema, 1995, RRP \$6.95).

While not a walking map, this 1:300 000 sheet will be useful to many bushwalkers and ski tourers venturing into Victoria's High Country.

CB

Kakadu National Park

(Hema, 1995, RRP \$6.00).

This is an attractive, up-to-date map which would be useful for planning a trip to Kakadu. However, it does not contain much more information than the free map given out at park entrances and the 1:400 000 scale is not suitable for bushwalking. In addition, the map is marred by several errors; for example, placing Koolpin Gorge about 12 kilometres upstream from its actual location. It is to be hoped that such errors will be corrected in a second edition.

Russell Willis

POSTERS & CARDS

Lake Pedder Poster

by David Neilson

(Snowgum Press, 1995, RRP \$13.95 or \$23.95 laminated plus \$5.00 postage and packing from Snowgum Press, PO Box 309, Emerald, Vic 3782).

Australian Panoramas Christmas Cards

(Robert Rankin, 1995, RRP \$9.95 for box of 12).

Australian Wildflowers

Christmas Cards

(Estella Rankin, 1995, RRP \$9.95 for box of 12).

Wilderness of Australia

Christmas Cards

(Robert Rankin, 1995, RRP \$9.95 for box of 12).

MUSIC

Tall Forest

(Listening Earth, PO Box 3004, Brighton, Vic 3186, 1995, RRP \$25.95).

I am sitting in my dingy little office listening to the clear calls of lyre-birds and the steady patter of rain on leaves.

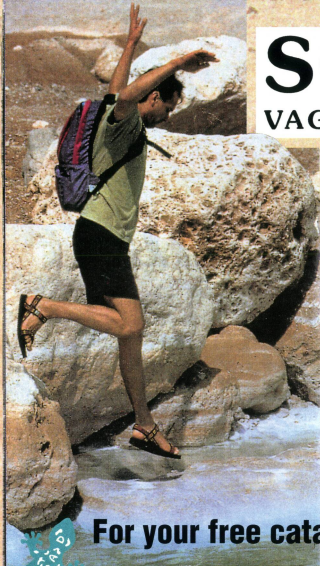
Tall Forest is a CD of sounds from East Gippsland; so clear that you will feel you are there; so refreshing that you will want to take a deep breath to smell the eucalyptus.

The recordings progress from the dawn chorus through to night sounds of possums and owls. There is plenty of detail for those who wish to listen closely but I was also surprised at how well this CD works as background sound.

For us city folk who need a forest 'fix', *Tall Forest* is just the thing. ■

Brian Walters

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OPEN SEASON

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I was very surprised to see the male full frontal on page 72 and the buttocks on page 77 of *Wild* no 58. (I've had to hide this copy from my wife.) I am looking forward to your next issue where I am sure you will be publishing similar shots of a female.

The 'coldest recorded temperatures' in the Mountain Designs ad on page 110 [*Actually, the outside back cover. Editor*] of the same issue has a few problems. It is Charlotte Pass not Charlottes Pass. A temperature of -23°C was recorded there in July 1994. Why hasn't the ACT been mentioned? I believe -15°C was recorded at Gudgenby, ACT, a few years ago.

Clive Conroy
Curtin, ACT

into trouble, it is part of the adventure to extricate ourselves.

How far away are we from it being considered irresponsible not to carry a GPS and phone on our mountain jaunts in the same way that it is considered irresponsible not to carry a map, compass and first aid kit now? Perhaps we are moving to a situation where the only way to experience true adventure is consciously to avoid taking such items into the mountains. Sure, people will then say that you are putting other people at risk (rescue teams and the like) but surely if we decide to visit remote areas, we should accept our situation and not necessarily expect to be pulled out should we get into trouble.

concerned by the young boy's interesting belaying technique and thus his ability to hold his much bigger climbing partner should he fall!

HuW Kingston
Rozelle, NSW

Michael Fox in his article 'Edith Falls' (*Wild* no 57) has certainly written about a lovely bushwalking route in the Top End but 'wilderness' it certainly is not and he is definitely guilty of misleading by omission. Readers may well have got the impression that this was real cross-country bushwalking requiring good orienteering skills and a fair level of experience. Let me set the record straight.

A track, which you must stay on, is marked all the way from Katherine Gorge to Edith Falls using metal tags painted with blue triangles and spaced 10 to 50 metres apart. The markers practically take you by the hand and lead you around the route. Campsites are designated and have some or all of the following features: toilet, emergency call-box, helipad, fireplace and check-point. Groups must register at the Ranger Station before they begin their walk (\$50 deposit plus \$3.00 a person a night camping fee) and they must walk the route from east to west (deposit may be reclaimed at Edith Falls)...

If you don't mind the 'developments' and the restrictions, pack away your compass and topographical maps, buy the map *A Guide to Nitmiluk* (Katherine Gorge) National Park published by the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory for \$5.00, and enjoy the walk for what it really is: a self-guided tour of some very pleasant woodlands and waterfalls and interesting Aboriginal rock art (which incidentally is in the Amphitheatre, not at Seventeen Mile Creek Crossing)...

Kay Durham
Narrabri, NSW



I was somewhat surprised to read the warning given in Glenn van der Knijff's skiing article in *Wild* no 57. I appreciate that the views of a magazine's correspondents do not always reflect the policies of the magazine. However, given that Glenn is part of the editorial team I wonder whether *Wild* really does believe that GPS receivers and mobile phones or CBs should be carried in terrain that is anything approaching remote. The feeling of self-sufficiency that many of us feel in such places could soon be taken away by maintaining this umbilical cord to our cluttered urban lives. We generally go to the mountains and the wilderness to simplify these lives, if only for a short while. To live by our own decisions and if these decisions, certain weather conditions or accidents get us

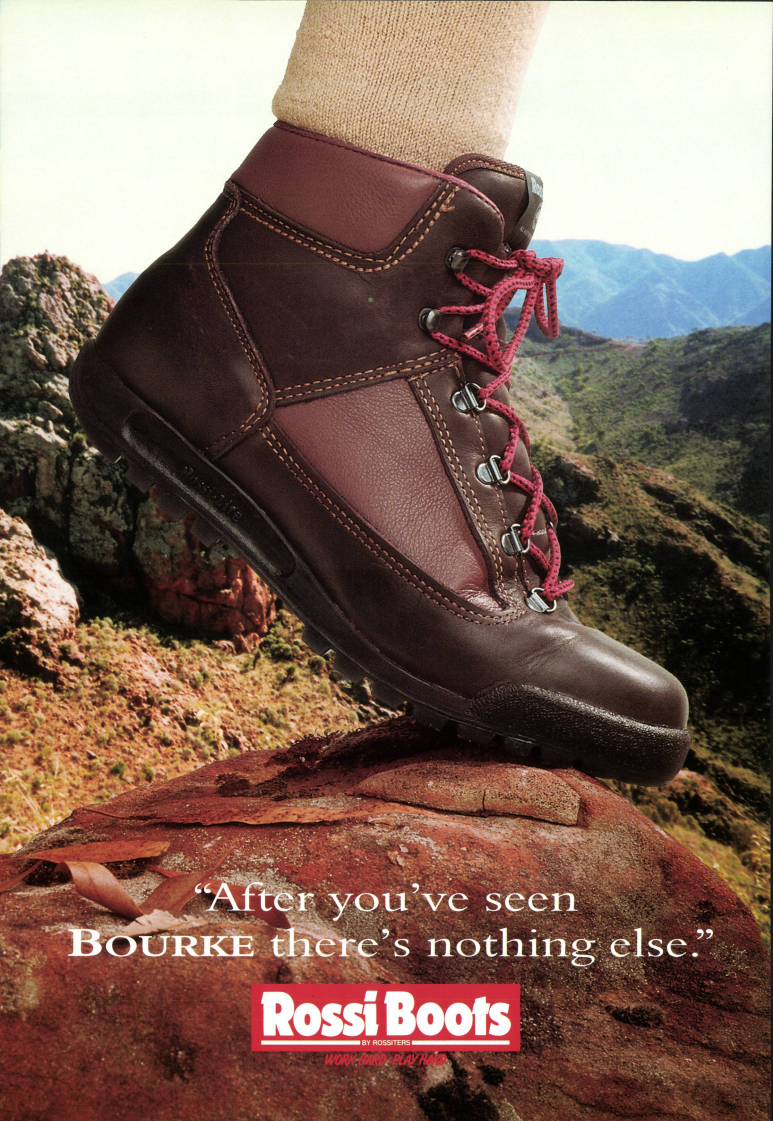
I accept that we can hardly return to the early days of exploration. That the advances in equipment—clothing, tents, footwear—have certainly made life much more comfortable. There must be some concern that ultimately our 'wilderness experiences' will become so technologically advanced as to become virtual reality experienced from the warmth and comfort of our own computer-controlled homes.

Glenn also states that 'it is essential that at least one member of the party has walked the entire route in the summer months'. Perhaps recommended but surely not essential...

One other point in what was otherwise an excellent issue was the advert on page 103 for Thermadry polypro. I know climbing walls are pretty casual places but I was somewhat

I was extremely disappointed to read the favourable review of *The Abels—Tasmania's Mountains over 1100 m High, Volume One*, in *Wild* no 57. This book seems designed to encourage the worst excesses of peak-bagging and competitive bushwalking in Tasmania, the sort of bushwalking both walkers and the bush can well do without. I regard bushwalking as a privileged opportunity to enjoy some of the inspiration, solitude, peace and beauty of the natural world which is usually drowned out and crushed in our modern cities. The privilege of the experience of natural areas carries a responsibility to protect those fragile areas.

The 'peak-bagging' mentality typified by *The Abels* reduces the wonderful natural environment to little more than points in a



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WILDFIRE

game. That might be alright for the person doing it, but unfortunately it has the effect of reducing everyone else's pleasure and, most importantly, of damaging the environment by increasing the number of likely walkers, and decreasing their care for the country they're racing across (or up).

Those who want to achieve high scores could do the rest of the walking community, and Australia's threatened and fragile natural environment, a favour by sticking to computer games in their own homes.

David Wanless
Moonah, Tas

It seems that we must fight wildfire with Wildfire! *Wild* has frequently and commendably taken a strong position for environmental protection. However, the double-page spread which introduces the article 'Victoria's Finest Alpine Circuit?', by *Wild* staff member Glenn van der Knijff (*Wild* no 58), legitimises and condones a sprawling camp fire at this timber-line 'wilderness' campsite.

Fire has no place in high altitude regions; witness its destructive impact upon the woodland in the background. The issue of fire escapes aside, the depletion of slow regenerating organic materials, and the creation of fire-scars are sufficient reasons to avoid the use of open fires in this fragile zone.

Rob Blakers
Stth Hobart, Tas

King Kong deposed?

Mr LS Kong's letter (*Wild* no 57) is difficult to comprehend. Is he suggesting we should accept the continued environmental damage caused by population growth in order to be politically correct? Or perhaps he is suggesting that we continue our own population growth because our neighbours to the north cannot, or will not, control their own population.

He has taken a number of writers to task for their comments on population growth and its impact on our environment, but what is the alternative? Our population growth is now solely due to immigration which makes restricting immigration the only method of population control. If this depresses Mr Kong then perhaps he should examine the options. If we continue on this present immigration level our population will double roughly every 70 years. The resulting urban sprawl and infrastructure requirements will certainly destroy much of the remaining open space with its unique flora and fauna. We will also become a net food importer since production of wheat has already peaked and food imports, along with our trade deficit, are increasing.

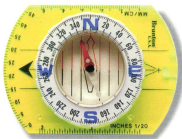
No matter how high our immigration rate we can never make an impact on the population growth of adjacent countries. We can only assist by providing aid in food and birth control. In order to do this we as a nation must have achieved sustainable agriculture practices and a stable population.

Don Owers
Dudley, NSW

A little indiscretion

This is just a short letter to bring a little indiscretion to your notice.

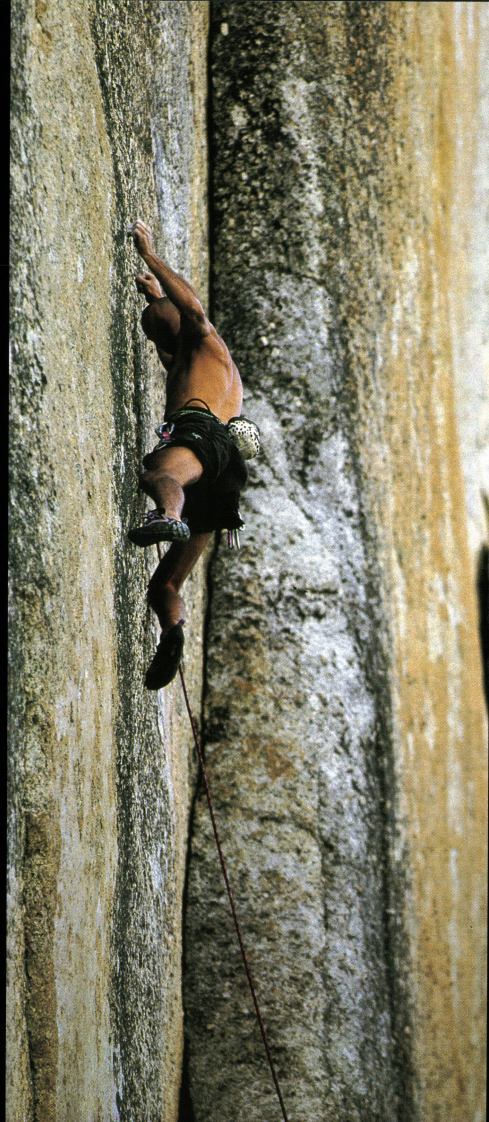
Go left at a big gum-tree.
Follow the Southern Cross in a
westerly direction. It looks like
the summit, but it's not. Three
or four kilometres past the
second stream, there's this
short cut. The
track starts
near this big
forked stick.



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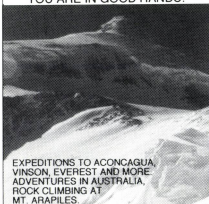


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WILDFIRE

As a recent competitor in the Outward Bound Australia team for the 1995 Land Rover Classic held near Omeo, Victoria, I was disappointed to see the methods so-called 'officials' were using to promote the event at check-points.

Armed with battery-operated power drills and screws they would walk around and place these screws (with attached sponsor sign) into any well-placed tree. (This was noticed uphill from the Bump and Grind rapid on the Mitta Mitta River.)

When it was suggested to an 'official' that a piece of string would do the trick just as easily he seemed to be lost for words and unable to provide an answer. In fact, he did not seem to be able to comprehend why his actions were being questioned. I'm sure that the major sponsors of the event (which included Land Rover Australia, Kathmandu, Maxxim and others) may not be pleased to see their names connected with such actions. Dare I suggest a 'terms of sponsorship' which would need to be followed by the event organisers?

Although the event itself was well organised and provides much publicity for the region of Omeo, it is unfortunate that small incidents such as this occur. These actions only provide participants and spectators with a sense of displeasure and the possibility of not entering in future years...

Mark Heyink
Tharwa, ACT

More than a job

Recently I enjoyed a few days' walking in the southern Flinders Ranges. During that time we climbed to the summit of Mt Brown (961 metres), south-east of Port Augusta.

Of interest is that Mt Brown was so named by Matthew Flinders in honour of Robert Brown, who was the botanist on board his ship *Investigator*. Brown had led a party from the ship to the summit of the peak in March 1802. They had thought the mountain 'to be not more than five miles from the beach' whereas in fact it is at least three times that distance. This miscalculation led to the party spending a night on the mountain 'in a gully without water and without fire'.

Brown went on to become one of the great botanists of the nineteenth century, and he is also remembered as the first to observe what is known in physics today as Brownian Motion.

My question—arising out of camp-fire discussion—is this: Are there other mountains that were climbed and named by white men prior to March 1802? There can't be too many, given the Blue Mountains were not crossed until 1813!

Congratulations on what continues to be a magazine of high quality. I am an original subscriber and have every copy on my shelf. I read each issue from cover to cover, usually within a few days of its arrival—and always I find it to be of much interest, information, stimulus and joy. Thank you for what so obviously is more than a job—your love, passion, and commitment shine through.

Alan Dutton
Glandore, SA

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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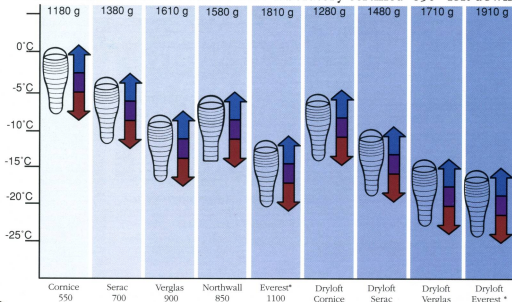
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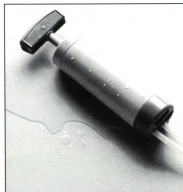
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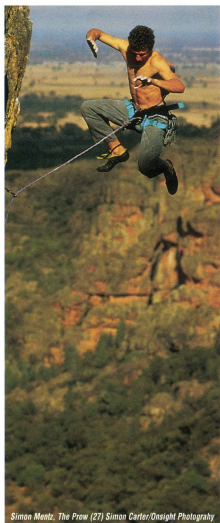
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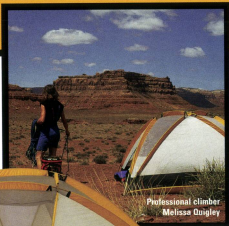
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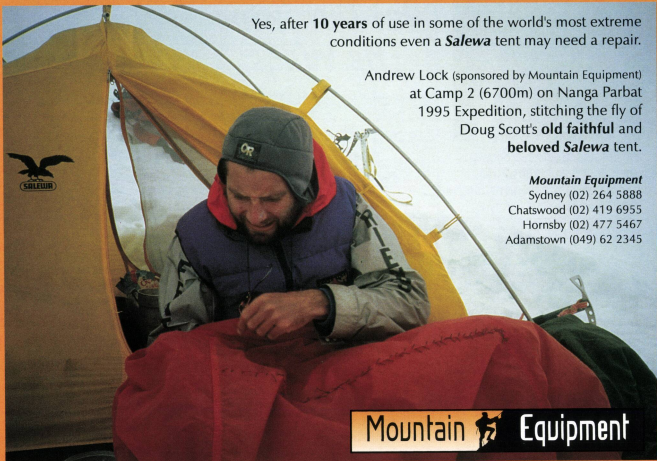
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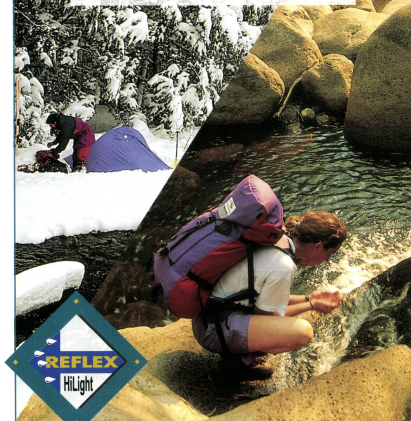


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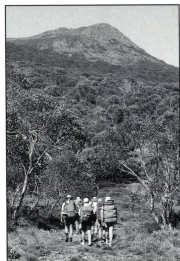
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The ERGONOMIC Design Story

(Patent Application Number PM8830)

Roman 'Ergonomic' design has more fully than ever before matched sleeping bags to human requirements. Another world first for 'ROMAN'. The two areas where people feel the cold most are their feet and shoulders.

We have provided a double layer of insulation at the shoulders of the hooded bags and for greater comfort have further widened the shoulders.

For greater thermal efficiency at the foot of the bag we have added an extra 30% fill. In addition to adding extra insulation the bags have been slightly tapered, which leaves plenty of space for the legs to move freely while removing all excess airspace.

The drawcord hood too has also been shaped to increase both its thermal efficiency and comfort.



The INSIDE Story - 33% Extra Fibres - No extra weight!

The FIBRE Story

ROMAN has blended various thickness fibres together to maximise their most important qualities: Loft and Resilience, Weight and Temperature Control. In other words, ROMAN has created the recipe for the perfect fill.

The Roman Fibre Exclusive (Patent Application Number PN4075)

Sleeping Bags using man-made filling as the insulating medium have conventionally been made from single thickness (Denier) fibres. Denier is the weight in grams of 9000 metres of the fibre.

After extensive research we have established that we can further enhance the insulation properties of the coarser (5-7 denier) and the finer (3-4 denier) fibres by blending them together.

All ROMAN Australian made sleeping bags contain **Enhanced Insulation Differential Denier Fibre Blends*** which gives better loft, resilience, insulation and compactability. This cannot be obtained by using individual denier fibres by themselves.

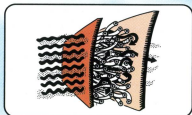
For Example, We have blended:-

Du Pont® Thermolite® together with

- Single hole super fine fibres an excellent insulator.
- The super fine fibres gives extremely high density pads.

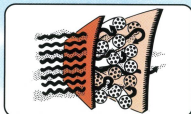
Du Pont® Quallofil® 7

- The 7 hole fibre traps and holds body heat. It relofts magnificently time and time again.
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*ROMAN blend of Du-Pont® Thermolite® and Du-Pont® Quallofil® 7

Warm, Lightweight, Reliable

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'Trek' Sleeping Bag Range
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Lite Trek with hood

Temperature: **0°**
Size: Generous Adult
Design: Ergonomic
Total Weight: 1.20kg ±
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Price: \$119



Ergonomically designed and light for easy carrying. This bag will keep on keeping on.

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Size: Generous Adult
Design: Ergonomic
Total Weight: 1.50kg ±
Fill: Blend of Du Pont® Thermolite® with Quallofil® 7
Price: \$139



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Design: Ergonomic
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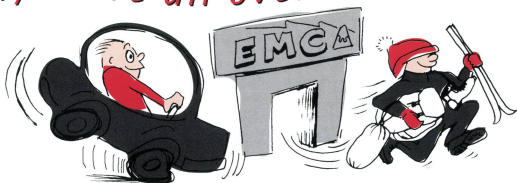
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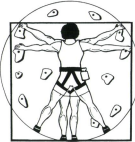
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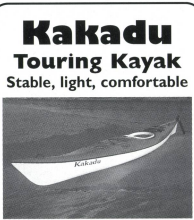
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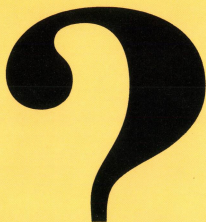
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